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**Emigration and turnout. Determinants of non-resident citizen electoral mobilization in home country legislative elections**

**Abstract**

A wide majority of countries acknowledge non-resident citizens' right to vote in elections in their country of origin. However, within the field of political behavior there is virtually no systematic comparative study explaining the electoral participation of citizens residing outside the borders of their country of origin. This paper analyses the determinants of external turnout of four groups of EU origin emigrants: French, Italians, Romanians and Croats, residing in countries inside and outside the EU. Drawing on previous studies related to voter turnout in the domestic context, we test how a series of institutional and political variables including district size, closeness of the electoral competition, mobilization by homeland political parties and the democratic context in the countries of residence determine levels of transnational political electoral participation.

## ***Introduction***

Electoral turnout is generally regarded as an important indicator of the quality of democratic life. If voter turnout is low, the legitimacy of the election and the democratic regime can be called into question. Over past decades a growing number of countries have extended voting rights to their citizens residing abroad. Elections and voter turnout have thus extended into the transnational realm. This phenomenon is accompanied by an increasing volume of studies seeking to explain emigrant turnout in particular transnational elections (Tintori 2012; Smith 2008; Lafleur, 2012). Recent studies also seek to explain emigrant political behaviour at the individual level (Leal and McCann 2012; Waldinger et al 2012; Escobar et al 2014; La Fleur 2012, Tintori 2012). However, these studies often focus on a group of emigrants from one or a limited number of destination countries. There is to date no broader systematic comparative perspective analysing the turnout of emigrant voters and, by extension, the quality of cross-border democratic electoral systems.

In this paper we take a first cut into a comparative analysis of voter turnout among emigrants which includes both the situation in the country of origin and the countries of residence. This type of analysis suffers from various data availability limitations as few countries register or release data on voter turnout per country of residence. The majority of countries granting external voting rights, such as the UK or Spain register the vote in the district of origin of the emigrants and do not appear to keep data on where exactly these votes come from. Indeed, only the few countries granting emigrants the right to not just vote but also elect their own special representatives appear to have information on turnout and result among emigrants per country of residence. This is because the votes are counted in special emigrant districts composed of various number of emigrant residence countries. Even so, emigrant countries have little information on the basic demographics and socio-economic profile of their emigrant voters.

Any analysis of turnout among emigrants faces the challenge of dealing with electoral processes across two political systems: the country of origin and the country of residence. In the following analysis we compare the aggregate turnout in four selected cases: Italy, France, Croatia and Romania. First, we discuss the very different aggregate levels of turnout in relation to some of the institutional and political characteristics of the external electoral systems across the cases. This includes the issues of voter registration, forms of casting the ballot and the particular trajectory of transnational electoral mobilization. Second we test a series of hypothesis related to the institutional and political context in the countries of residence such as the size of the emigrant collective, the degree of democracy and etc. To that end we draw on an original database of institutional and political variables per country of residence for emigrants from France, Italy, Croatia and Romania.

## ***Theoretical framework***

### ***Turnout in domestic constituencies***

Aggregate turnout is a measure that expresses the ‘health’ of the electorate in a country, since it is less sensitive to subjective factors as it is the case of individual political participation (Franklin 2004). The most frequent definition of turnout is the share of

population who voted over the total number of voting-age population in a given area. Other ways of measuring turnout consider the share of people who voted over the number of registered voters or even the absolute number of votes cast on the election day (Geys 2006). Decreasing turnout rates in advanced democracies have been considered as an alarm signal that points to deeper social and political problems that contemporary democracies face: voter alienation, declining satisfaction with democracy and civic disengagement (Lockerbie 1993; Pharr et al 2000). Given the importance of the topic, there are a large number of studies that explain both theoretically and empirically what factors contribute to turnout increase or decrease in time and across countries (Cox and Munger 1989; Blais 2006; Fornos et al 2004; Matsusaka 1993).

Most studies seek to explain aggregated turnout with reference to contextual, system level factors (Geys 2006; Mattila 2003). There are three types of explanations of turnout levels in for domestic constituencies: institutional, socio-economic and political (Blais 2006; Fornos et al 2004; Geys 2006; Powell 1982). Moreover, Fornos et al (2004) draw attention to the fact that in contexts such as Latin America, cultural explanations assessing the role of political culture should also be taken into account when explaining turnout.

Institutional variables are an important set of factors that has captured scholars' attention when explaining turnout. Not surprisingly, it has been shown that compulsory voting increases turnout (Jackman 1987) although more research is needed in order to detail what kind of compulsory voting arrangements are more effective (Franklin 2004). Another set of administrative provisions that affect turnout are registration requirements. It has been argued both theoretically and empirically that pre-electoral registration requirements are an additional cost for the voter and is therefore likely to lower the number of those who participate in elections (Rosenstone and Wolfinger 1978). In relation to electoral system characteristics, proportional systems are found to increase turnout in comparison to majoritarian ones. Regarding parliamentary arrangements, although initial research shows a positive effect of unicameralism on turnout, subsequent studies failed to confirm that turnout co-varies positively with the political power owned by the lower chamber (Blais and Carty 1990).

In what regards socio-economic variables, it has been shown that turnout is higher in economically advanced democracies. However, the main difference is between the poorest countries and the rest (Blais and Dobrzynska 1998). A distinct set of socio-economic indicators refers to district size and population characteristics. The mechanisms that connect these variables with turnout are based on various theoretical explanations. District and population size point to the classical voter paradox formulated by Downs (1957) according to which rational voters gain no benefit from the act of participation in elections since the probability of their influencing the process is close to zero. It has been argued that living in smaller communities lower political information costs and make political outcomes more tangible (Dahl and Tufte 1973). At the same time, smaller communities give voters the perception that their vote has a larger influence over the outcome than larger communities. Related to these arguments scholars also proposed to test the influence of population density and level of urbanization. However, the empirical evidence is inconclusive reporting contradictory results. It is rather the stability of the population which has been found to be a significant predictor for turnout. Hoffman-Martinot (1994) argues that, on the one hand, population stability increases feelings of identification with a group. On the other hand, a larger period of residence in an area improves knowledge on local issues and candidates.

A third set of factors explaining turnout make reference to political variables. Here, there is a wealth of studies testing for the effect of closeness of the electoral outcome (Blais 2006; Geys 2006). A meta-analysis of turnout research shows that there is a ‘crystal clear’ connection between closeness and turnout: the closer the race the higher the turnout. Two alternative explanations are given: that in close races the voters perceive their vote as more influential (Matsusaka and Palda 1993) and that there is more elite mobilization in close races, a fact which influences positively on people’s decision to cast a vote (Cox and Munger 1989). A point that differentiates these studies is the basis on which closeness is calculated. Although theoretically there is more justification for using ex ante measurements, that is, closeness based on pre-election opinion polls, the use of ex-post measures is the rule rather than the exception (Geys 2006). More specifically, the majority of scholars calculate closeness based on the output of the election rather than on its previous estimations. More ambiguous effects have been reported about the connection between political fragmentation and turnout. In few studies it has been shown that the number of parties has a positive effect on participation since it gives more options to electors. However, an important proportion of empirical research shows a negative correlation between the number of parties and turnout (Jackman 1987; Blais and Carty 1990; Blais&Dobrzynska 1998). The main explanation is that the presence of many parties may lead voters to perceive that their vote is actually not influent over the process of decision-making. A larger number of parties is usually associated with the formation of governing coalitions, which in turn, have less certain political outcomes (Blais 2006).

Another political variable is the process of mobilization by political parties. Geys (2006) examine the argument that campaign expenditure may increase aggregate turnout rates. The idea, largely confirmed in a range of studies, is that campaigns lower the cost of acquisition of information and increase awareness among the electorate (Geys, 2006). Within studies of political campaigns and communication, it has been noted that parties have shifted towards more professionalized or ‘Americanized’ campaigns relying on media impact, opinion polls, and more personalized or ‘presidentialized’ campaign messages (Poguntke and Webb 2005; Norris Pippa 2005). To this can be added the digitalization of electoral strategies whereby more and more communication is taking place through webpages and social media. However, evidence suggest that mainly local campaigning still feature in the activities of political parties and tend to have an influence at election day (Dalton, Farrell, and McAllister 2011;Karp, Banducci, and Bowler 2008). Indeed, direct contact with a candidate or party worker has been identified as the potentially most important campaign activity in terms of influencing turnout and voter preferences of citizens (Ibid: 69).

### ***Turnout in external constituencies***

While the turnout of domestic voters is a well documented phenomenon, migrants’ political mobilization in relation to their home country is still a marginal topic in electoral studies. Some limitations are self-evident, but nonetheless extremely influential: the lack of appropriate official data on individual and aggregated political participation of non-resident citizens. Very few countries actually report participation numbers from abroad and even less have a population register of citizens residing in another country. These facts impede the measurement of turnout for external voters in home country elections.

We choose the countries of residence as the comparative territorial unit although they do not correspond to the emigrant electoral districts set out by the countries of origin. This is mainly because the districts are difficult to compare across countries of origin. For instance,

Croatia just has one worldwide district for emigrant voters while France divides the external electorate into 11 districts. Moreover, arguably the countries of residence are an important territorial unit for both emigrant communities and home country politicians. Within migration studies, cross-country differences are highly relevant in explaining migrant groups' political socialization and behaviour (Ireland 2000). Moreover, homeland political actors approach emigrant communities in relation to their socio-economic characteristics and countries of settlement, without subsuming to a global strategy towards non-resident citizens (Østergaard-Nielsen 2003b; Collyer 2013). For these reasons the countries of destination constitute relevant territorial units when studying emigrant political mobilization. In consequence, external turnout is calculated as the share of emigrants who cast a vote over the total number of emigrants per country of destination.

Given the contextual embeddedness of emigrant turnout in host and home country settings, it is expected that both contexts exert an influence on homeland political mobilization. Taking stock of the literature that explains turnout in domestic districts, we propose four categories of factors to explain variation in the degree of emigrant political participation in homeland elections.

The institutional characteristics that shape external political participation are expected to influence substantially the proportion of emigrants who cast a vote in homeland elections. Since all the cases discussed in this paper are characterized by special representation, no rigorous scrutiny can be made regarding the role of the electoral system for external voter turnout. However, it is expected that special representation does not entail a similar degree of participation among various groups of external voters when different institutional arrangements are in place.

As already mentioned above, variation in registration requirements is strongly correlated to participation rates. For external voters registration requirements pose even greater costs on participation than for domestic voters since the vote from abroad requires the investment of more resources. Pre-election registration can suppose that the external voter travels to the nearest consulate or that she sends the participation request to an international destination. Depending on the postal services in the country of residence, the registration requirement can reach the destination country way after the deadline leaving aside important number of potential external electors (see the case of Spanish voters in Venezuela). For this reason, we argue that

*H1a. Countries with tighter registration requirements for external electoral participation, display lower turnout rates from abroad.*

Another institutional arrangement that is strongly correlated to the cost of voting from abroad is the possibility to vote by mail or electronically. While voters in domestic constituencies do not necessarily have problems of distance to the voting poll, these distances can make an important difference in the case of external constituencies. If the only possibility to participate in homeland elections is by casting the vote in person in a polling station hundreds of kilometres away from the voter's residence, then the existence of external voting rights becomes superfluous. In contrast the possibility to cast the vote via mail or internet strongly reduces the amount of resources (time and money) that the voter has to incur in order to vote. It is therefore expected that

*H1b. Postal and/or electronic voting from abroad increase the participation rate of external voters.*

The second set of factors that explain external turnout is related to the socio-economic characteristics of emigrant communities. Individual-level research does not show a correlation between individual socio-economic resources and external political participation (Escobar et al 2014), although no proper conclusions can be drawn at the aggregate level. It could be argued that more resourceful emigrant communities foster members' level of political interest and information regarding homeland affairs, which in turn has consequences at the aggregate level. However, a strong intervening factor is emigrants' relation and perception of homeland politics and their perception of how to balance civic and political involvement in the country of destination and at home. To that extent the connection between the socio-economic characteristics of emigrant communities and turnout in homeland elections is not necessarily straightforward and should be assessed through empirical analysis. Unfortunately, the available data for the cases studied in this paper does not provide any information of the socio-economic status of emigrant communities in the countries of destination.

The relevance of population size can be estimated and is expected to have a negative effect on external turnout. Smaller emigrant communities do not necessarily give the perception that migrants have a larger degree of influence over the political outcome, given that the countries of residence do not necessarily correspond to external electoral districts. However, as in the case of municipalities, smaller emigrant communities are expected to have tighter networks which in turn lower information costs and bring homeland politics closer to the individual emigrant voters. At the same time, it is more likely that the presence of homeland political institutions such as embassies and consulates has a larger resonance and reach out to a larger proportion of emigrants in smaller emigrant communities than in larger ones. It is expected therefore that

*H2. Emigrant turnout is inversely correlated with the size of emigrant community in the country of destination.*

A third category of factors that shape external turnout is related to the political context. Similar to the case of domestic constituencies, the closeness of the race should be correlated to the rate of participation from abroad within external districts or countries of residence. However, emigrants can hardly take the pulse of the political race in their 'constituency' when they live abroad. There are no opinion polls and little, if any press coverage so that they can form an opinion on the closeness of the race. However, they can perceive how close the race is through the mobilization efforts of both community leaders and political elites from the country of origin. Thus, it is likely that when emigrant communities in a destination country are divided in terms of their political preferences, they display a higher degree of civic mobilization, which in turn has a positive effect in engaging emigrant residents into the politics of the country of origin. As well, it is plausible to think that homeland political elites would invest more resources in countries where they perceive that the emigrant electorate is similarly divided in terms of political preferences. In consequence, we argue that

*H3. The closer the race between homeland political parties in a destination country, the higher the turnout of emigrant voters.*

An integral part of these processes is the actual mobilization by political parties which, as mentioned, is generally thought to increase turnout. Lafleur (2012) suggests to operationalize the level of campaign expenditure as the 'presence of political parties abroad,

whether it involves advertising in local media, sending representatives of candidates abroad to campaign among emigrants, or directly getting in touch with emigrants via regular mail or e-mail (Lafleur 2012: 111). The problem with this definition is that it is difficult to come by such detailed information for a large number of cases. We therefore propose to look at the presence of political parties in the form of the presence of a political branch of the party in the country of destination. Political parties in a series of countries with external voting rights may decide to open up party branches in countries of residence of emigrants. For instance, the Spanish parties of PSOE and PP have branches throughout especially Europe and Latin American which play an important part in the coordination of the external electoral campaign. The definition of what actually constitutes a 'branch' varies from party to party but here we rely on the numbers reported (backed up by addresses and contact persons) from the political parties themselves. And we argue that:

*H4. The presence of branches of homeland political parties in a particular country of residence increases the turnout of the emigrant population residing in that country.*

A fourth category of factors that we propose to examine in relation to external turnout is the role of the context of destination. Emigrant communities' political participation in homeland elections is not determined solely by the institutional and political contexts in the countries of origin. The context in the country of residence plays an important role in how they manage to mobilize and organize politically both locally and transnationally. There is an ample debate in political socialization literature in relation to how the 'home country toolkit' and the context of destination shape migrants' forms of civic and political engagement (Jones-Correa 1997; Cho et al 2006; Landolt and Goldring 2006; Wong 2000). But the relation between individual-level participation and aggregated turnout at the country of residence level is not necessarily straightforward. The argument can be formulated both ways. More democratic countries offer more opportunities for migrant political engagement both locally and transnationally. At the same time, less democratic contexts truncate migrants' political practices in the context of reception and for this reason they may encourage an orientation towards the politics of the country of origin. Given these ambiguous effects, we propose to test whether

*H5. Turnout in home country elections is higher in more democratic countries of residence.*

The literature on transnational migration assumes that migrants remain interested in their country of origin (Østergaard-Nielsen 2003a; Portes 2001). However, there are no comparative studies of how the political context of the country of residence or the political proximity between the country of origin and residence may strengthen or weaken this interest. That said one of the intuitions in this paper is that the political proximity between the country of origin and residence may be of relevance. For instance if migrants have moved to another state with strong economic or political relations with their country of origin or to a state that is within the same intergovernmental or supranational organization, this could nurture a continued willingness among emigrants to participate in homeland elections. More concretely, in the case of the EU, the political and economic situation in the country of residence is no longer isolated from the political situation in the country of origin. Moreover, continued interest in the country of origin politics may be reinforced by the right of EU mobile citizens to vote for candidates of the country of origin in European parliamentary

elections. A recent survey show that 11% of EU migrants vote for their homeland MEPs compared to 16% voting for MEPs of country of residence (Recchi et al 2012). We therefore propose that:

*H6. Emigrants residing within the EU are more likely to participate in homeland elections compared to those residing outside the boundaries of the EU.*

### ***Case selection***

The hypotheses proposed are discussed in relation to turnout of external citizens in four European countries: Croatia, France, Italy and Romania. The selection of cases is based on several criteria. The countries share a number of common features such as a relatively large number of citizens who live abroad, the right to special representation in homeland parliament and membership in the EU. Nonetheless, the cases selected are different in what regards the registration and voting procedures from abroad. More specifically, Croatian and French external voters are requested to register a few weeks before the elections in order to cast a vote, while Italians and Romanians living abroad are not subject to such requirements. However, Romanians and Croats can only vote in person at embassies and consulates of their country of origin, while Italians and French can send their vote by mail. Additionally, French expats can vote in person and electronically. Apart from these differences, the four cases are illustrative for diverse democratic traditions and political cultures in the EU. These cross-country differences allow for a better contextualization of the differences in turnout rates and the interplay between socio-economic, institutional and political variables in the countries of origin and of residents.

Regarding the size of the emigrant communities of the cases discussed in this paper, all have populations residing abroad that exceed two million. Although there is no official register of Croatians living abroad, media reports over two and a half million Croatians and their descendants<sup>1</sup>, although only 400,000 registered to vote in 2011. The external communities are mainly spread between the US, EU countries and South America (Chile and Argentina). An important number of Croatian citizens live in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia. Croatians living abroad could vote and elect the president of the republic and special MPs in a single external district for the first time in 1995. The number of the special representatives has been reduced from six to three, mainly as a discontent of leftist parties who considered that expats had too much influence in homeland political affairs (Kasapovic 2012). Election results and scholarly analyses show that the Croatian diaspora has been a faithful supporter of the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) since 1995 (Sajfert 2013; Ragazzi 2009).

More than 2.5 million French citizens are estimated to live outside of France, and by the last presidential and legislative election in 2012, 1.594 million French citizens were inscribed in the French consulates. The geographical distribution is heavily dominated by Western Europe (49%) followed by North America (13%). The representation and voting rights of the French citizens abroad has undergone a number of important changes over the last decades. With the 5th Republic in 1958, French citizens abroad gained representation in the French Senate with 3 senators elected by a special electoral college (later renamed the Assembly of French Citizens Abroad (AFE)). Over the next five decades, the appointment

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.croatia.eu/article.php?id=17&lang=2>



procedures of the AFE underwent a number of reforms and also the number of senators for the French abroad were increased to 6 in 1962 and finally to 12 in 1983. In 1976, the French citizens abroad were given the right to vote in presidential elections either in person or by proxy in French embassies and consulates. In the 2012 elections the French abroad could also elect 11 MPs for the National Assembly.

In 2011, the Romanian citizens (together with the Turks) were the largest group of foreign-born residents in the EU countries, exceeding 2.3 million. Almost 80% of the intra-EU Romanian migrants reside in Italy (42%) and Spain (36%) (Eurostat 2011). Another important Romanian community lives in the US, reaching almost 500,000, although official sources estimate that its actual number may reach over one million (DRP 2010). The Romanian state granted the right to vote from afar in 1991, after the fall of the communist regime. The external citizens were allowed to vote in person for the presidential and the parliamentary elections at the voting polls established by the Romanian embassies and consulates. Until 2008 the votes of the external citizens in the parliamentary elections were counted in the Bucharest constituency in a closed list proportional system. The 2008 electoral reform changed the rules for the election of MPs in both chambers and this reform also implied a change in the principle of representation of the external voters. The diaspora constituency is divided in four districts for the chamber of deputies and only two for the election of the Senators.

It is Italy that has by far the largest number of external voters among the countries included in this paper. With large waves of emigration, in particular in the late 19th, early 20th century, Italians have settled in especially Europe and the Americas. In 2011 no less than 4.115 Italian citizens were registered in the official register of Italians abroad (the Aire). Of these registered emigrants 55% have settled elsewhere in Europe with 40% in the EU15. In the Americas the largest part (31,1%) are settled in central and Latin America and 8.1% in North America (Tintori, 2011). Until 2001, Italians abroad could only vote in homeland elections if they returned home on election day. From 2001, after intense lobbying by the emigrants and the insistent advocacy of the *Allianza Nazionale*, Italians abroad were not only granted the right to vote in homeland elections from afar, but also to elect their own representatives (12 for the Chamber of Deputies and 6 for the Senate) in 4 external districts: Europe, Latin America, Central and North America, and Africa, Asia, Oceania and Antartide. Contrary to the electoral system within Italy where the lists are closed, the emigrants can vote for several candidates on open lists within each of the four constituencies. Table 1 summarizes the main external voting procedures in the four cases.

Table 1. Number of emigrants and external voting procedures in the cases selected

	<b>Size of emigrant population/ proportion of domestic electorate</b>	<b>Type of election</b>	<b>Access to vote, limits</b>	<b>Modes of voting</b>	<b>Registration to vote before each election?</b>	<b>History of external voting rights</b>	<b>Number of representatives</b>
<b>Croatia</b>	2.5/25%	Legislative Presidential	None apart from nationality	Personal	Yes, in person at consulates before each election	Since 1995, 5 parliamentary elections, 5 presidential elections	3 deputies
<b>France</b>	1.05/2.8%	Presidential Legislative	None apart from nationality	Personal, Postal via mail, email/internet	Yes (general inscription in register for French abroad)	Since 1981 presidential, since 2008 special rep for NA =1 election in 2012	11 deputies and 12 senators
<b>Italy</b>	4.1/9.7%	Legislative	None apart from nationality	Postal	No (general inscription in register for Italians abroad)	Since 2001 with special rep = 3 elections	12 deputies and 6 senators
<b>Romania</b>	3.3/ 17.9%	Legislative Presidential	None apart from nationality	Personal	No, just show passport before voting at consulate	Since 2001/special rep since 2008 = 2 elections	4 deputies and 2 senators

### *Data and method*

Turnout in homeland elections is calculated at the level of countries of residence as the percentage of emigrants who cast a vote in the last homeland elections from the total number of migrants who reside in the respective country. We consider the following legislative elections: 2011 in Croatia, 2012 in France, 2013 in Italy and 2012 in Romania. The lack of any official data on emigrant age cohorts makes it impossible to estimate turnout as the percentage of migrants who voted over the voting age migrant population. However, since the procedure is consistent among cases it should not distort the comparison but it may report smaller turnout figures than the actual ones. The data on emigrant participation is taken from the official sites of the Ministry of interior of each country in the study. The number of Italian and French residents abroad is available online through embassy and consulate registers. In collecting the data for Romania and Croatia we encountered two main problems. First, since there is no register of Romanian and Croatian residents abroad, we took the data on emigrant population of these countries from the United Nations Global Migration Database, 2010 estimated. The UN data only register foreign born migrants, that is, the first generation. Second, we have a much lower number of observations in the cases of the Croatian and Romanian diaspora because of a relatively high number of missing data for various countries of residence.

Regarding the independent variables, the size of the emigrant community is estimated as the natural logarithm of the total number of emigrants from France, Italy, Croatia or Romania per country of residence. The institutional variables such as registration requirements and availability of postal/electronic voting have been coded from relevant legislation in each country of origin studied. Drawing on previous studies, we use a measure of ex-post electoral competition. The closeness of the race is calculated as the difference in percentages obtained by the first and second ranked party in elections for the lowest chamber in each country of residence at that respective election. The data is available online on election results pages posted by national electoral authorities of the four countries analysed. The number of party branches has been calculated as the sum of homeland external party branches per country of residence. The data is available in most of the cases on party websites and through interviews that we conducted with party representatives. In the Croatian case, we found that only HDZ has branches in another country. In the French case we calculated the sum of PS and UMP branches in each country of residence while in the Romanian case the variable represents the sum of PSD, PDL, PNL and PPDD external chapters. We could not estimate this variable in the Italian case due to the lack of data for PdL external chapters.

In relation to the political variables related to the country of destination we use various measures of the ‘degree of democracy’ of the countries of destination. One measure is the Economist Intelligence Unit Democracy Index; another is the Freedom House country score, while a third one is the aggregated democracy score proposed by the Quality of Government Institute. We performed various tests with these measurements although, as we explain further, we report the one that gives a better estimation of the model. Countries that are members of the EU plus Norway and Switzerland have been coded as “1” and the rest “0”.

## ***Findings***

Given the small number of countries of origin analysed in this paper, we cannot estimate the effect of country of origin related variables (registration requirements and the possibilities for voting by mail or internet) through regression analysis with nested data. Nonetheless, performing descriptive analysis is suggestive for a better contextualization of hypotheses H1a and H1b. Table 2 reports the aggregated levels of turnout from abroad in the cases studied. This figure ranges from 4% in the case of Croatia to almost 38% in the case of Italian external voters. As mentioned, Croatians abroad are requested to register before each parliamentary and presidential election in order to vote. Moreover, they can only vote in person at Croatian embassies and consulates in the countries of residence. The lack of registration requirements and postal voting in the case of Italy is positively correlated with the highest participation rate. The figure for France is smaller than in the case of Italy, but it is four times higher than in the case of Croatia and almost double that of Romania. French living abroad have to register online in order to be able to vote but, at the same time, they have the possibility to cast their vote in person at consulates and embassies and to send it via mail or to vote electronically. Romanians abroad vote in a larger proportion than Croatians abroad and part of this difference can be explained by the fact that there are no registration requirements for Romanian external voters. Nonetheless, they can only vote in person.

Table 2. Aggregated external turnout rates per country of residence.

<b>Country</b>	<b>Mean turnout from abroad (%)</b>	<b>Standard deviation</b>	<b>Number of countries of residence in the sample</b>
<b>Croatia (2011)</b>	4.11	15.30	48
<b>France (2012)</b>	18.07	8.40	160
<b>Italy (2013)</b>	37.7	20.40	145
<b>Romania (2012)</b>	10.24	17.47	73

Several other factors influence the difference in aggregated external turnout between these countries, but the analysis cannot account for these factors. One is that Italians abroad have already participated in various rounds of elections since 2001 while French expats could vote for the first time for special representation in the National Assembly in 2012. The difference between Croatian and Romanian external turnout is possibly also determined by the organization of the external constituencies. While Croatia has opted for one world wide single external district, Romania has four external districts (Europe, America, Africa and Asia). It is therefore likely that the dispersion of external electoral districts in the Romanian case also implies a dispersion and local concentration of the mobilization efforts of the political elites, which in turn, have positive effect on emigrant turnout in a larger number of countries. Lastly, the differences in political cultures between these countries play an essential role. Voters in eastern and central European countries are generally more dissatisfied with politics than are western voters (Rueschemeyer et al.1998). In 2011, a quarter of French citizens and 14 per cent of Italians declared to have trust in the national parliament in comparison to eight per cent of Croatians and Romanians respectively (Eurobarometer 2011).

The role of the socio-economic and political variables related to the country of destination is presented in table 2 with estimates of eight linear regressions with robust standard errors. Given the differences between the countries selected in terms of institutional

arrangements for external political participation and civic and political cultures, we choose to present the results separately for each of the four countries of origin instead of in the form of pooled estimates. This allows for a better understanding and contextualization of how the proposed socio-economic and political variables influence external turnout in the four countries. The variables related to the country of destination political context have been introduced separately in the analysis due to the important overlap between EU membership and high scores in terms of quality of democracy. Thus, Model 1 for each country tests for the impact of EU membership while Model 2 introduces the Index of Democracy score and continent dummies.

The results show that the size of the emigrant community in a country is inversely correlated with turnout in home country elections in all cases except Italy. The strong connection between emigrant community size and aggregated electoral participation among Croatian, French and Romanian emigrants resonate with general findings regarding electoral turnout. Applying the rational choice perspective in the case of external turnout, it can be argued that migrants who live in smaller ethnic communities perceive that their vote is more influential than those who live in larger ethnic communities. Additionally, information on homeland political affairs reaches a larger proportion of voters in smaller emigrant communities than in larger ones. Related to this issue is that home country political institutions such as consulates and embassies manage to cluster a larger share of emigrant citizens in small size communities. This in turn has a positive effect on their political mobilization regarding the country of origin elections. One explanation for why emigrant community size does not influence external turnout in the Italian case may be related to the postal voting. Expat Italian voters do not need 'physical' encounters with community leaders or homeland political actors in order to be informed about elections. Nor do they have to invest important resources in casting their vote. Most of them receive electoral propaganda and the voting bulletin per mail. Under these circumstances, virtually all potential voters are informed about elections, regardless of the size of the expat community in a country. It can be argued that French voters can vote by post as well, but nonetheless community size is important. One possible explanation is that the 2012 election was the first legislative election. In this case, community size can actually be influential for a better diffusion of information regarding the electoral rights of its members.

The role of electoral competition in the form of closeness of the race is not uniform across cases. The predictor is not significant for explaining Romanian and Croatian external voter turnout. One explanation is related to the large number of non-mobilized voters. The fact that around ninety per cent of the external electorate of these countries abstains does not help political parties to make a proper estimate of how close the race is. It is likely that under these circumstances parties' efforts to mobilize the external vote is not related to how close are voters' aggregated preferences but rather to a 'trial and error' intent to approach the large amount of not mobilized electorate. In the case of France, electoral competition has the predicted negative effect. This fact can be related to a better knowledge by homeland political actors of the electorate residing abroad and, in consequence, to a better distribution of resources for countries and districts with uncertain electoral outcomes. More specifically, the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs disposes of studies related to the socio-economic profile of external voters. Moreover, various survey companies in collaboration with TV5 took the pulse of the external electorate before the presidential and parliamentary elections from

2012<sup>2</sup>. The unexpected result in the Italian case may be again explained by the longer tenure of the external voting rights. This fact may lead to the consolidation of stable and electorates with clear political preferences and interest in participating in homeland affairs.

The number of party branches per country of residence has, on the overall a positive effect. Due to the lack of data on the number of PdL external branches, the variable could not be used in the analysis of Italian turnout. In the case of Croatia, only the HDZ has external branches. The number of external branches of HDZ is positively correlated with turnout, but the variable is not significant after controlling for EU membership. Since almost all the external branches of HDZ are in EU countries, it is impossible to scrutinize for the effect of this variable outside the European context. In the case of Romania and France, the number of party branches has a positive effect independently of the geographical location of the external voters.

Regarding the role of country of residence contextual variables, the degree of democracy in the country of residence has a positive correlation only in the case of France. EU membership has a positive effect on turnout in all cases except for Croatia. The former may be explained by the location of relatively old, post-colonial French communities in less democratic countries such as the North of Africa. The members of these communities hold French passports and have the right to participate in the country of origin elections but may be less connected with French politics than more recent French emigration to the EU, North America or Asia.

With regards to the negative effect of EU membership for aggregated turnout in the Croatian case, it should be noted that important Croatian communities, who are also more politically mobilized than elsewhere, reside neighbouring countries not belonging to the EU such as Serbia or Bosnia-Herzegovina (Laguerre 2013; Ragazzi 2009). The small number of observations in the Croatian case and the ‘outliers’ from ex-Yugoslavia countries may explain why external turnout in EU countries is lower than in countries outside the EU.

Lastly, the results show that in the French case, turnout in EU countries is significantly higher than in countries located in other continents and in non-EU Europe. In the Italian case continent dummies have a negative sign in comparison to the EU and they are statistically significant for countries located in Latin America, North America and Australia. In what regards the Romanian case, the results show that turnout in non-EU and North America turnout is higher than in EU countries. This finding is correlated with the profile of Romanian external voters in these locations. More specifically, there are numerous mobilized Romanian kin minorities in non-EU neighbouring countries. As well, Romanian migrants in the US and Canada are either former Communist dissidents or highly skilled. These sociological profiles are more prone to have interest and resources to participate in politics in contrast to the large proportion of labour migrants to the EU (Sandu et al 2010). These differences in socio-economic resources may have spillovers at the level of aggregated turnout in EU countries and in North America (Popescu 2005).

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.tv5.org/cms/chaine-francophone/info/France-2012/Les-articles/p-21018-Sondage-les-intentions-de-vote-des-Francais-de-l-etranger.htm>

Table 3. Linear regression coefficients with robust standard errors. Standard errors in parentheses

Variables	Croatia Model 1	Croatia Model 2	France Model 1	France Model 2	Italy Model 1	Italy Model 2	Romania Model 1	Romania Model 2
Number of migrants per Country of res	-2.98 (1.28)*	-2.05 (0.45)*	-3.11 (0.53)**	-3.33 (0.74)*	0.55 (0.78)	0.69 (1.40)	-4.63 (1.43)**	-5.29 (1.83)**
Electoral competition	3.59 (2.9)	-0.76 (5.64)	-13.3 (3.45)**	-9.66 (5.07)*	57.25 (13.02)**	43.43 (10.16)**	5.69 (6.02)	5.34 (5.63)
Number of homeland party branches	2.85 (1.55)	3.45 (1.48)*	1.11 (0.47)*	1.74 (1.16)			1.72 (0.85)*	1.87 (0.89)*
Index of Democracy		-5.50 (3.38)		0.92 (0.17)**		-1.26 (2.11)		0.06 (0.43)
EU membership	-7.35 (2.95)*		2.79 (0.91)*		7.00 (4.43)		-0.28 (0.50)	
<b>Continent (ref EU)</b>								
Africa				0.24 (0.91)		-7.01 (9.02)		-6.12 (5.72)
Asia				1.21 (0.86)		-8.50 (8.27)		3.80 (3.95)
Latin America				-3.91 (0.53)**		-17.75 (4.38)**		-8.84 (4.06)*
Eastern Europe (non-EU)				1.84 (1.18)		8.37 (6.76)		5.08 (2.15)*
North America (US & Canada)				-16.80 (15.37)		-14.15 (3.22)**		9.21 (3.99)*
Australia & Oceania				-4.18 (0.63)**		-11.09 (1.87)**		-0.82 (1.19)
Intercept	28.33 (10.14)*	61.66 (29.18)	41.70 (4.15)**	37.73 (5.44)**	26.89 (4.76)**	43.76 (18.51)*	44.76 (19.12)**	47.02 (15.29)**
N	37	37	160	149	145	145	72	72
R2	0.29	0.44	0.35	0.40	0.12	0.23	0.34	0.40

### *Concluding remarks*

How and why citizens turn to vote has been the subject of extensive research over the past decades. However, despite the plurality of perspectives and explanations, these studies are subject to methodological nationalism. They tend to see turnout as the exclusive characteristic of resident political communities. Yet, non-resident citizens' right to participate in home country elections is recognized by a wide majority of world states. Moreover, an increasing number grants special representation rights in homeland parliaments. This paper takes stock of these phenomena and undertakes an original attempt to explain the factors that shape turnout in the transnational political field.

We show that turnout in home country elections is not a unitary phenomenon, but an embedded political process in host and home countries. External voting arrangements such as registration and postal voting modify the significance of predictors that are considered to have a 'crystal clear' association with turnout of resident national citizens. Importantly, our findings show that the level of electoral competition and home country political party mobilization are important predictors for external turnout, although their effect is mediated by how easy or complicated are the external voting procedures. Moreover, geographical and political distance matter. On the overall, emigrants who reside in another EU country are more likely to vote in home country elections than their co-nationals outside the EU. This finding contributes to present research on the horizontal and vertical processes of Europeanization. It shows that intra-EU mobility does not only contribute to the political socialization of European migrants in the politics of their country of residence, but it also brings closer the politics back home.

On a final note we acknowledge various limitations of the present study, mainly generated by the lack of data. We observe that there is a strong correlation between external voting procedures and turnout, but we cannot give an account of other factors related to the countries of origin. Among these, political culture and democratic traditions are important predictors that the analysis cannot directly test due to the small number of cases analysed. Moreover, there is very little knowledge on the socio-economic characteristics of immigrants in various countries of origin as well as on their spatial concentration. Although no conclusions can be inferred from individual level data, it is likely that distinct migration typologies and length of stay abroad have an important impact on external political participation.



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