

Civic competence of EU university students

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S1640399

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science,
program [European Studies], University of Twente

2017

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1. Introduction

Challenges from within and outside of the European Union (EU) in recent decades have made it clear that EU cannot take its historical success for granted. Challenges in the societal domain include for example, a European community that heads toward inclusiveness and innovation in a changing world, and a secure Europe that can protect freedom and security of Europe and its citizens (“Societal Challenges,” n.d.). Confronted with these challenges, EU aims to engage citizens in social and political life not only to ensure EU’s fundamental democratic values flourish but also to foster individuals’ and the society’s competence of adapting to the world of rapid changes and growing interconnection (European Parliament & Council of the European Union, 2006).

By far the EU has made efforts in civic empowerment and engagement in three ways: a) citizenship education based in schools that educates young citizens of basic values and knowledge of democratic civic life, which is embedded in the EU-wide Erasmus+ programme (European Parliament & Council of the European Union, 2006; Eurydice, 2012), b) Citizens’ Initiative that channels civic groups’ opinions to the formal legislative process (European Commission, 2015) and c) periodical civic society programmes such as the European Year of Citizens that encourages debates and dialogs in different scopes of European societies, aiming at promoting the public discourse and learning of ‘being European’ (“European Years,” 2017). These effects are based on the belief that citizens’ engagement is a necessity of democracy, that sound civic competence is essential of effective civic participation, and that civic competence and engagement can be facilitated via public promotions (European Parliament & European Commission, 2011; Eurydice, 2012).

In the academia, researchers have shown the interest in the outcome of those efforts and assessed citizens’ ‘civic competence’ of acting and thinking democratically. While most studies focus on citizens no older than lower secondary school students, this thesis intends to study the civic competence of university students and discuss the influential factors behind their levels of civic competence. University students are in between students and adults. More interestingly, by 2017, about 7 years after the release of the latest EU-wide comprehensive study on youths - the 2009 IEA civic study (will be discussed later), the 13-14-year-olds

involved in the study have entered ‘full’ citizenship in their lifespan, whose surrounding environment is still strongly influenced by policies and institutions, but are exposed to a wider choice of democratic participation—decision-making on different levels, equipped with better autonomy and possibly more political awareness.

In this thesis, the main research question is ‘*What factors explain the levels of civic competence of EU university students?*’ Sub-research questions are: 1) *what are the levels of civic competence of the university students?* 2) *what are the factors that possibly explain the measured civic competence?*

1) *What are the levels of civic competence that EU university students have achieved?*

To answer this question, we need a clear understanding of civic competence and how it can be measured. This research uses a combined approach that borrows ideas from previous studies and is composed of cognitive and affective aspects. From a cognitive perspective, civic knowledge and skills are to be measured. It may cover a range of cognitive elements, from concrete and mechanistic information about the European political frameworks to the wider policy climate and institutional processes that are relevant in the shaping of civic communities. While from the affective aspect, students’ attitude and intended behaviours are important, such as their trust in political parties and intention of political engagement. 2)

What are the factors that possibly explain the civic competence of EU university students?

The answer to this sub-question would be presented in the form of assessing the association between related elements and students’ civic competence.

The thesis is composed of three parts. The first part is theoretical and starts from a chapter that discusses the core concept ‘civic competence’, with a review of existing civic competence studies. The following chapter categorizes theories that explain civic competence, and develops the theoretical framework for this research. The second part of the thesis concerns the operationalization and design of the research. In the third part, results of the empirical research will be presented, followed by discussion and a conclusion to reflect on the whole thesis.

Compared with prevailing research that focuses mainly on European youth, this research aims at filling the gap by focusing on adult students in the universities. Academically this will contribute to civic competence studies by providing data on a new group. On the social level,

studies on adult students will facilitate a more profound picture of how civic competence studies shall contribute to decision-makers' learning about the citizens. That is because the assessment on young adult citizens will be informative for the decision makers to understand the role played by the educational systems and the social settings of promoting democracy in Europe. For future research on the EU's policies and initiatives that are intended to prepare the young Europeans for future civic participation in the adulthood, this research would be informative and could be a starting point.

2. Civic competence

Civic competence reflects citizens' qualities of '[participating] in civil society, community and/or political life' (Hoskins et al., 2012). In democratic societies, although different states may have distinct views on citizenship and the criteria of a 'good' citizen, civic competence is usually composed of four parts: knowledge, skills, values and attitude. 'Knowledge' and 'skills' mean one's cognitive mastery of democracy, such as the understanding of the process of political voting. From the affective aspect, 'values' refer to one's own principle of making judgement while 'attitude' reflects one's interest at civic participation. These sub-indicators will be explained later.

2.1. Three streams of citizenship theories

Above all, we shall acknowledge that there is not a universal definition of civic competence. Issues of whether or not 'attitude' composes a part of civic competence, as well as how 'nationalized' citizens shall be, raise different voices on civic competence, derived from at least three streams of thoughts: liberal, civic republic and critical modes.

The liberal concept of citizenship focuses on knowledge, skills and dispositions towards engagement, but it does not insist citizens to vote. This stream of thoughts initially focuses on the individuals' autonomy in the individual-state relation, but nowadays shifts to human interrelation, individual human rights, and trust and social capital in the context of 'Big Society' (Hoskins et al., 2012, pp. 17–18).

The civic republican view believes that citizens have the responsibility of active political engagement, because social values—such as social spiritedness, solidarity, and common good,

will only be achieved through political actions of individuals. The rationale of the republican theories is a long-term but self-interested view that individual interests require active individual action, so that the individual will benefit from common good of the public.

Lastly, the critical perspective is actually an ‘all-included’ concept of democratic values, which basically criticizes the current political settings, mainly the privileged concept ‘citizen’ and the vague idea ‘common good’ in the other two popular theories of democratic citizenship. On top of the critiques, it emphasizes citizens’ capabilities of critically analysing social issues and injustices, and seeks equality and greater representativeness in political involvement (Hoskins et al., 2012, pp. 19–20). In some cases it is also called the ‘cosmopolitan’ view due to a preference to universal human rights (Hoskins, Saisana, & Villalba, 2015).

2.2. The EU civic competence

The divergence of interpreting civic competence implies a diversity of implementing strategies of improving civic competence and the difficulty in the harmonization for a common European citizenship. In fact, the EU level holds a blurry description of a common civic society where citizens shall actively participate in representative democracies, but ‘only’ requires Member States to provide citizenship education to students at primary and lower secondary schools (Council of Europe, 2010; Hoskins et al., 2012). Member States are to tailor national civic educational schemes based on their own understanding of ‘European’ citizenship. Since the facilitation of civic competence is an all-compassing work, it is reasonable that national divergence also occurs in the social atmosphere of civic environment.

Our research takes the EU perception of civic competence as the point of departure. The up-to-date idea of European citizenship has its legal root in the Treaty of Maastricht, which established a legal and political European citizenship of a person holding the nationality of an EU Member State (Rutkowski & Engel, 2010, p. 382). According to this treaty, in order to prepare citizens to actively engage in social and political construction of States and the Union, it becomes a necessity to educate the new Europeans. They are supposed to become ‘active, responsible’, and ‘engaged democratic citizens’, beyond the legal and political concept of

European citizenship (Jeliaskova, 2015, p. 10) and more importantly, beyond a single rationale that either sticks to the nation boundaries or ignoring the national realities. A Europeanized citizenship is ‘characterized by mutual respect and non-violence and in accordance with human rights and democracy (Hoskins, 2006)’.

In the EU, civic competence is facilitated by supporting learning of active citizenship, in a way that combines two educational ideas of lifelong learning (from cradle to grave) and lifewide learning (learning in different social contexts, not just in school) (Hoskins et al., 2012, p. 13). The rationale behind EU’s citizenship promotion is that democratic learning experience including formal education will help raise the levels of civic competence (knowledge, skills, attitude and values), and eventually enables citizens to become active citizens, although there may be barriers that hold well-educated citizens from taking actions (Hoskins et al., 2012, p. 13).

Enlisted in the eight key competences of EU citizens in the Educational and Training framework 2020 (Figure 1), civic competence is interrelated with social competence. That says, the EU civic competence shall ‘[equip] individuals to fully participate in civic life, based on knowledge of social and political concepts and structures and a commitment to active and democratic participation’ (European Parliament & Council of the European Union, 2006).

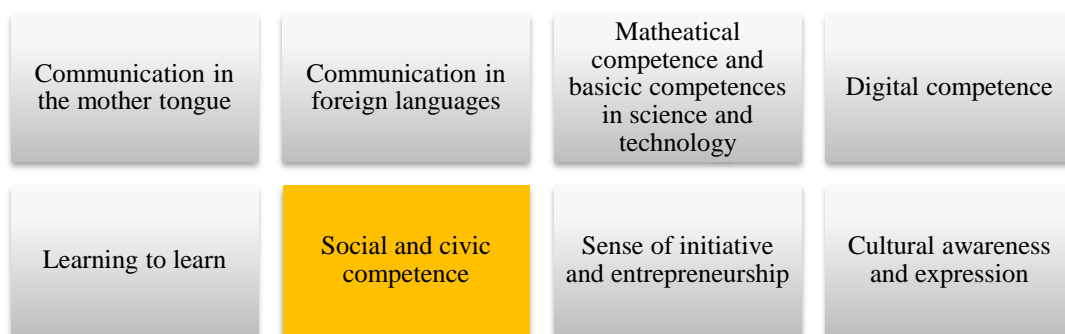


Figure 1: The eight key competences for EU citizens to acquire (European Parliament & Council of the European Union, 2006)

The EU scheme of civic competence is best constructed by the past few civic competence studies of the IEA (the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement).

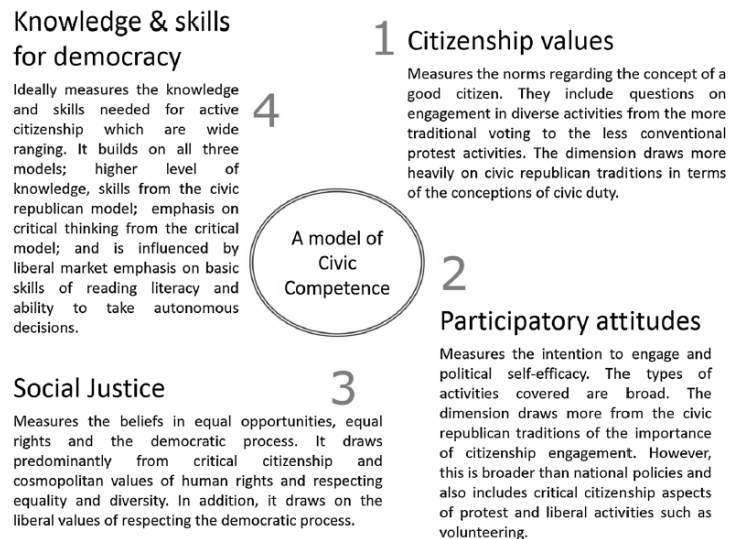


Figure 2: A model of civic competence used to develop CCCI-2 (Hoskins et al., 2015, p. 435)

In this model, a) Knowledge and skills for democracy refer to the cognitive learning about the civic society and politics, such as the political framework of EU. b) Citizenship values measures the perception of political values and draws heavily on the civic republican traditions in terms of the conception of civic duty to the construction of the polity. c) Social justice also reflects the affective aspect of one's civic competence, but expects a cosmopolitan concern on social minorities and the vulnerable. d) Participatory attitude measures the intention to engage in civic and political life, covering a wide range of activities from formal voting to student association and voluntary work, so combining the three streams of democratic citizenship.

This model mixes the three streams of democratic citizenship (liberal, civic republican and critical/cosmopolitan) into one European citizenship perspective and expects citizens to be: a) liberal—with sufficient knowledge and skills of democratic political participation, b) civic republican—show interest in actively participating in democratic politics in local, national and European levels, and c) critical/cosmopolitan—contribute ‘constructively’ by critically reflecting on politics and society and by thinking beyond national patriotism with cosmopolitan concerns for humanity.

2.3. Current studies

Current literature about civic competence consists of two categories that look at the issue from different angles: one emphasizes the social and political implications of the prevailing level of civic competence; the other investigates the factors that explain the phenomena and seeks the causal association, which will have a thorough review in the next chapter. The two types of studies are not strictly separated and explanatory components are almost must-haves in research since 2000s.

2.3.1. Social and political aspects

Speaking with social and political concerns, a few researchers give interesting views on the Europeanization of citizenship and civic competence. Philippou (2009) and Keating (2009) hold critical views on EU's policies on civic and citizenship education, relating the issue to identity building as well as the future of the European Union. Philippou (2009) discusses the ethno cultural aspect of citizenship and civic identity of Cyprus in the aftermath of the country's independence and EU membership, arguing that the citizenship education for either national or European orientation largely neglects the country's failure in dealing with identity and citizenship issues, which is a 'remarkable' part of the country's contemporary evolution, and subsequently citizenship Europeanization in Cyprus have little effect on the nationalist discourse in curricula.

Keating (2009) gives a comprehensive overview of the Europeanization of citizenship and straightforwardly points out the contradictories of EU's effort in promoting the European citizenship: for citizenship is constructed and promoted towards the end of nation(-like) common identity, while the European citizenship does not serve one in the way that a national citizenship contributes to its nation state, then a European citizenship can hardly find its value and uniqueness in comparison with a national citizenship. Besides, Keating (2009) also questions the feasibility of building a common EU citizenship that builds only upon a shared future, a common European society, instead of common history or culture, given that EU's Eastward expansion arouses questions about the boundary of an imaginary Europe (Roma, Greece, and Christian, etc.).

Bromley and Mäkinen (2011) in their research on the Finnish citizenship textbook in compulsory schools, figure that the Finnish citizenship education at compulsory schooling has the distinguishing emphasis on cosmopolitan concept of citizenship and an obvious increase of diversity in image or text information in textbooks. This well corresponds to IEA's citizenship studies that find youths in Nordic countries generally outstand in having a critical mind at social issues, by which Hoskins and colleagues (2015) suggest that teaching methods and curricula have a real impact on shaping the youths' civic competence.

2.3.2. Explanatory literature

In the other category of related research, most prevailing explanatory research on civic competence are conducted by scientists from political or educational domains and build their argument on quantitative methods. A number of studies use the data from IEA's citizenship studies and in recent days the ICCS data in particular. The ICCS (International Civics and Citizenship Education Study) includes a few similar studies conducted globally, with the latest ICCS collecting data of 26 European countries and a few other countries in Asia, Oceania, North America and Latin America (Schulz, Ainley, Fraillon, Kerr, & Losito, 2010). The European civic studies were implemented with joint effort of the European Commission as well as EU research and educational institutions.

Comparing the two most widely used IEA studies, CIVED (Civic Education Survey) 1999 and ICCS 2009, there are adjustment of measurements and indicators and therefore different results between the two studies. However, most findings are similar and consistent. In general, European citizens aged 13-14 years old have significant diversity in civic competence, including their knowledge, skills and attitude concerned with active civic participation. There are also country and area variations in different aspects of civic competence (Eurydice, 2012; Hoskins et al., 2015). The two studies suggest for instance that Eastern European countries and former communist countries mostly score the lowest in cognitive learning about domestic and EU politics, while Southern European countries usually have high scores in general competence, with Italy appearing frequently in the first range of EU states (Hoskins et al., 2012).

Diversity is common among EU youth's civic competence, but the IEA researchers were only able to suggest possible explanations. The Netherlands, for example, is the only Western EU country whose youths often rank at the bottom either in the composite index for general civic performance or in sub-indicators for particular civic competence (Hoskins et al., 2012). While researchers find it hard to explain this low score with the country's outstanding achievement in economic prosperity, the quality of education or the consistent history of democracy, they believe it is related to the increasing political populism with an ethnic cultural orientation, which somehow makes the youth reluctant at civic cognitive learning, critical thinking and responsibly reacting in the civic society (Hoskins et al., 2012). Additionally, the IEA researchers think that changes over societal evolution and personal lifespan will have impact on the studies because more opportunities are offered. For example, when entering adulthood, people tend to participate in politics more frequently and intentionally, which is mostly due to the legal constrain on the age of political participation; in Nordic countries such as Finland, even though youths are very sceptical at politics, their civic participation in reality significantly exceeds the former communist countries, which where a country's generosity of offering civic opportunities may have made a difference (Hoskins et al., 2012, p. 71).

In spite of a considerable amount of studies of the civic competence of European citizens, the populations that have been studied focus on the youth at lower secondary schools or younger, with few looking at students in their early adulthood. That is possibly because students at this stage of life are good access to ideal settings of schooling, families and communities.

2.4. Theoretical framework of measuring civic competence

Even though the IEA's studies are highly approved by most other civic competence studies, their methods were tailored for the youth a decade ago, so we adjust the IEA model to our research. The fundamental framework of measuring the civic competence follows the four-dimension conceptualization: a) Knowledge, b) Skills c) Values, and d) Attitude, which is built on the EU's mixed application of the liberal, civic republican, and the critical/cosmopolitan model of citizenship:

Table 1: The four indicators to assess civic competence

Sub-indicator	Aspect	Definition (context related)
Knowledge	Cognitive	<p>Knowledge that prepares citizens for active and constructive civic participation.</p> <p>It is reflected by the acknowledgement of how the political and legal framework of one’s own nation and EU look like. This perspective believes that cognitive learning of the civic society is essential to constructive civic actions. That admits the possibility that meaningful civic actions can be not constructive enough without sufficient knowledge backup.</p>
Skills	Cognitive	<p>Skills needed for active civic participation.</p> <p>Besides an understanding of the rationale of political voting, community campaign, voluntary work and legal actions, which is deeper than merely ‘acknowledgement’, civic skills emphasize the capability of taking autonomous decisions and critical thinking (Hoskins et al., 2015, p. 435).</p>
Values	Affective	<p>Values associated with social justice.</p> <p>In civic society, civic values reflect one’s principles of deciding what is justifiable or unjustifiable for the social common good. These principles are affective preparation for one’s judgement toward the external civic environment and for one’s evaluation of the interpersonal relations, which may further affect one’s decisions on factual actions in the civic social domain.</p>
Attitude	Affective	<p>The intention to engage in politics and civic society, and political efficacy.</p> <p>The types of activities covered are broad, including national policies, protests and volunteering. Ideally, this aspect of civic competence shall be backed up by the other three aspects, otherwise an ‘active’ participatory attitude is random and</p>

		meaningless for democracy.
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To conclude this chapter, this thesis investigates and discusses civic competence of university students in an EU context, where the ideal citizenship is defined as a political and social concept, as active and constructive citizenship in the society of participatory and representative democracy. It regards democratic values and human rights as the core concepts and tends to emphasize the cosmopolitan human concern (Keating, 2009).

3. Factors behind civic competence

3.1. Political literacy theories

Factors that contribute to shaping civic competence may have effect on citizens' overall performance, or/and on certain sub-competence(s). Theories of 'political literacy' (Cassel & Lo, 1997) suggest that influential factors basically work via three routines: cognitively, structurally and through social agents. Cognitive ability theories place responsibility for civic competence on individual ability and motivation; structural role theories on social forces outside the individual; and traditional socialization (agents) theories on the effectiveness of agents, whether their influence is intentional or not (Cassel & Lo, 1997). Whereas in reality, influential factors may function via multiple ways and have complex influence on one's civic competence.

3.1.1. Cognitive approach

Learning experience has direct influence on the cognitive dimension of civic competence (knowledge and skills about civic society). It includes a) formal school education and curricula, b) learning of related knowledge in civic social associations—regardless the associations are intended or not, c) experience learning through real practices in political or social activities, such as volunteering and voting.

First, formal schooling and curricula give citizens a direct way to study the knowledge and skills for civic participation in life. In the 1990s and before, scientists believed that cognitive accumulation of political knowledge was the basis of motivating citizens to participate in politics, which is why governments have been investing in civic education since

then (Cassel & Lo, 1997). However, formal civic education can work on the cognitive aspect, but cannot guarantee the other aspects of civic competence. McAllister (1998) argues that top-down civic education may increase citizens' political knowledge, but is less effective in shaping political behaviour than in generating positive views of democratic institutions. Yet the impact of formal civic education could lead to a complex outcome: in the Italian case of migrants' children, as children accumulate their knowledge about the civic society, their trust in political institutions drops, but in turn they show higher motivation in civic participation (Azzolini, 2016).

Secondly, civic experience in the form of voluntary service, party membership or regular voting can be common substitute or supplement to formal civic education. This phenomena occurred along with the emergence of civic organizations and civic society in the 1990s, when the notion 'lifelong learning' flourished and non-formal learning at non-school institutions started to be recognized by society and governments (Federal Government, 2008).

Thirdly, hands-on experience is helpful to the mastery of civic and political skills. In the US, direct democracy in initiative states 'appears to inspire individuals to be better citizens by sparking their interest, mobilizing them to go to the polls, and encouraging them to play a more active role in the political process' in the first place, secondly a tradition of such makes citizens to be familiar and experienced at civic involvement, and thirdly it produces long-term cognitive impact even when the local citizens migrate to other states, instead of short-term impact of campaigns (Burnett & Kogan, 2012).

3.1.2. Social agents

From the traditional perspective of social agents, causal links between civic competence and schools, teachers (instructors), governments and civic associations seem direct. Parents are also important social agents of constructing one's civic values and attitude at a young age. This approach assumes that civic competence can be taught and shall be guided (Bengtsson, 2015).

Firstly, in formal education, schools and teachers (instructors) affect students' civic competence by demonstrating the 'proper' civic actions within the civic community of campus, besides providing cognitive empowerment in 'competence and skills'. In some schools that take their social role of civic education seriously, there are deliberative and civic

school activities such as student councils and regular dialogs with students, which are effective in encouraging students to think and act proactively (Isac, Maslowski, Creemers, & van der Werf, 2014; Shah, Mcleod, & Lee, 2009). While some studies argue that when comparing with influence from the student level, school level may not significantly affect students' civic value and motivation for participation (Dijkstra, Geijsel, Ledoux, van der Veen, & ten Dam, 2015), some others argue that schools' impacts indeed come from the instructors' approaches, where assigned debate in class or ballads on stage, for instance, may help students change their orientations, which prepares them to gain higher level of civic value (Finkel & Ernst, 2012; Zorwick & Wade, 2016).

Secondly, in out-of-school life, civic associations as well as governments play a crucial role in shaping civic competence. For example, voluntary experience in civic associations enable citizens to connect with the society and with other citizens, so that citizens gain not only hands-on experience in certain field, but also interpersonal connection, which is essential to democratic discourses and social capital (Federal Government, 2008). The impact of civic associations can also be observed when the agent is hindering the potential of young citizens, such as the AIDS organization case where young volunteers' feel discouraged due to the adult colleagues' ignorance and marginalization, which alarm social agents of the importance of self-construction (Campbell, Gibbs, Maimane, Nair, & Sibiya, 2009). For the same reason, governments shall be included in the realm of social agents. In the EU, the Commission and the authorities of Member States are the main bodies that continuously initiated and implement programmes for civic discourse and practises.

Besides, parents are important social agents at the early stage of one's lifecycle that have significant impact on one's civic development. Closely related to parents' direct teaching and indirect demonstration at home during one's childhood, the SES (socioeconomic status) of parents is a convenient entrance to observe the parenting behaviour. The SES can be parents' ethnic origins, religious beliefs, or sexual orientations. In comparison to children of heterosexual parents, children raised by female same-sex parents score higher in 'values' when dealing with conflicts, possibly because of their early exposure to diversity (Bos, Gartrell, Roeleveld, & Ledoux, 2016). In Azzolini's research, although due to possible limitation of language and accesses and subsequently children of migrants score lower in

‘knowledge and skills’ than native children, they have higher levels of participation in the community than natives, ‘perhaps as a reaction to the perceived inequality of rights’ (Azzolini, 2016).

3.1.3. Structural approach

Different from the cognitive effect that can be “easily” detected, social structural factors shape one’s civic attitude and values that are reflected via other indicators. Climate of the family, SES of one’s own, heterogeneity/homogeneity of the immediate community, and big social events are the main sources of impact.

Next to parents’ SES, which mainly works via social agents, the structural factor ‘climate’ in the family has a close relation with children’s perceptions on the civic society. Geijsel, Ledoux, Reumerman and ten Dam (2012) believe that an open family climate will facilitate the development of young citizens’ communication competence, which is necessary for their involvement in a wider community in the future. Climate of a family include families’ openness towards discussions over news, conflicts, and etc. Last but not least, according to McDevitt and Chaffee (2002), political communication at home during adolescence gives strong impact on one’s future life, and so is one’s affective dimension of civic competence affected by parenting in childhood.

Secondly, SES of individuals has a relation with one’s civic attitude and values, especially in the case of social minorities. Hereby, the minority status refers to the personal factors that may make the person a minority in the society and likely to be marginalized from social recognition or common welfare. These SES include one’s ethnic origins, religious beliefs, and sexual orientations. Castellanos and Cole (2015) found that in a white society, people with colour are more sensitive and are more aware of perceiving issues critically than the white natives. Gender may also add to the factor pool, for girls are found more skilful to handle disagreements (Bos et al., 2016; Geijsel et al., 2012), because girls are likely to be perceived and taught to be more tolerant and obedient than boys in most societies.

Thirdly, the heterogeneity/homogeneity of the immediate community influences one’s civic perspective in a structural way. This argument is based on the social structural understanding about ‘social minority’, that the sensitiveness of social minorities is the result

of social imbalance, rather than the intrinsic characteristic of the group. Accordingly, Azzolini (2016) argues that children of natives may learn about social (un)justices from migrant fellows, and subsequently increase or decrease their trust and commitment in the political institutions of their country. Similarly, the everyday interaction with native children also enables children of minorities to compare and generate their judgement over the civic society. In fact, the heterogeneity/homogeneity notion also applies to the community as big as municipalities. According to Geijsel et al (2015), students from cities with high level of cultural and ethnical heterogeneity perform significantly better in both cognitive and affective competences, compared with those from suburban areas, because the metropolitan environment 'socializes' the children to tolerate and to thrive with divergent values and information. In other words, heterogeneity and homogeneity of the ethnic composition in a small community - including schools – may better explain the cross-group difference and intra-group learning in the development of one's affective civic competence.

However, it remains unclear whether a community from a broader scope, history, tradition and other social settings could effectively affect one's perception and reaction to the civic society. Hoskins et al. (2015) reject the hypothesised influence from a country's length of democratic history and stability of democracy. Disagreements arise in Yee's comparative study of the political cultures in Macau, Hong Kong and Taiwan, suggesting that long-term social structures may not work all the time, and that the political culture of university students are very susceptible to contemporary political and social environment. The author argues that because the sampled students are from similar cultural backgrounds (Chinese Confucianism) but have rather divergent civic values, which well corresponds to their distinct contemporary society and polity (1996).

Finally, big social events may change one's affective civic competence in a structural way. On the one hand, citizens involved in social events learn hands-on experience of civic practises in a cognitive approach; on the other hand, it is often social agents that lead public opinions and the trend of events. Nevertheless, it is through a social structural way that big social events deliver a long-term influence on citizens and are memorized by the public. For example, SARS (an epidemical accident in 2003 in China and the neighbour regions) opened a 'window' for universities, citizens and civic organizations to cooperate in the Anti-SARS

project, after which participating students told the feeling of contributing effectively to others and thus improved their civic commitment (participatory attitude) (Yuen-tsang & Tsien-Wong, 2004). That is to say, that the effectiveness of social agents – schools and civic associations – is amplified to a social level only in a structural approach rather than via the sole contribution of particular agents.

3.2. Theoretical framework for the explanatory research

As is shown in the previous texts, by sorting the three approaches for factors to affect the civic competence of an individual, the political literacy theories of Cassel and Lo (Cassel & Lo, 1997) provides a relatively complete scheme for the explanatory research, but there are a few things that reminds our research to keep critical and to adjust the theories.

In the political literacy theories, civic competence is equivalent to political literacy and focuses on the ‘political’ facet of the concept, without sufficient attention to the social meaning, which is uniqueness of the contemporary era. For example, civic participation is largely constrained to political participation such as joining political parties and formal voting, while in the prevailing EU, ‘politics’ permeate into the daily life in various ways and interacts with the civic society. Civic associations, grassroots powers in media and politics, and informal channels of involving citizens’ voices in public decision making are good examples of that. Without recognizing the political bias of the political literacy theories, our investigation of civic competence is much limited to a narrow scope and should lose its contemporary significance.

To adjust the theories into our research, we set up a framework as follows. First, following the cognitive path, the rationale of this research is that civic competence is achievable and the development of one’s civic competence is dynamic due to the complex effect of multiple factors. Second, the civic competence of individuals is directly affected by social agents. Third, communities in a broad sense, external influences are constructed in a social structural way, where the interaction in between different social agents and individual backgrounds overwhelms the sole contribution of any single factor.

According to theories and prevailing studies, we hypothesize that the following factors may explain the levels of civic competence. They are sorted in line with the principle of

social agents but followed with the backup of all three theories, so that the general picture of factors could be depicted clearly.

a) Formal school education and curricula during previous school education. School education affects students' civic competence in a way that mixes the three approaches of political literacy. The curricula and perceptions reflected by teaching, textbooks and class discussion have a direct impact on students' knowledge of the civic society. While during this process, social agents like educational departments of the government, schools and teachers have different levels of autonomy at implementing the teaching approaches, which can vary from area to area and country to country. Structurally, the heterogeneity/homogeneity on the campus, such as diversity among the students with regard to their languages, genders, etc. may also affect students' civic competence, with either cognitive learning on the society or affective perceptions over social issues.

Our hypothesis H1: *The better quality one's previous civic education, the higher levels of civic competence the person achieves.*

b) Civic experience at civic social associations, and/or particular social activities and public events. Experience at civic social level requires that citizens have personal interactions with other citizens and with a common and explicit social theme, which usually happens when citizens join the membership of social civic associations or student associations, volunteer in the communities, and take part in formal political voting. Knowledge and skills are acquired in the first place, so there is a cognitive path of civic learning. Social agents also need clear statements about their standing points, values and methods, and therefore the role of agents is there, too. Lastly, the event and activity itself may have its own rationale to draw agents and individuals' attention and effort, and hence from a social structural dimension, civic experience itself could well explain the levels of one's civic competence.

Our hypothesis H2: *The more experience a person has with civic participation, the higher levels of civic competence the person achieves.*

c) Family and the immediate community. Particularly in one's childhood, parents are crucial social agents of constructing one's civic values and attitude. Parents' teaching and demonstrating of 'proper' acts have close relation to the SES of parents, such as gender orientation and migration background. Social structurally, the climate of family is also

closely related to children's early development of social skills and values, which will possibly accompany into the children's adulthood.

Our hypotheses H3: *The more flexibility in one's family climate, the higher levels of civic competence the person achieves*; H34: *The more heterogeneity in the immediate community, the higher levels of civic competence the person achieves*.

d) Personal SES. In the social context, personal background in the social context has impact on 'socializing' the person. For example, in the comparison with other colleagues in the immediate community, an individual becomes a minority regarding gender, religion or ethnic origin, where the relative social economic status may suppress the person to think critically at the social treatment and act proactively for justice. However, if it is the social relationship due to the SES distinction that leads to the development of one's civic competence, the impact shall be bilateral. In other words, the personal SES of one person may explain the levels of civic competence of this person as well as the others within the interpersonal cycle.

Our hypothesis H5: *The more 'marginalization' one experiences in the interpersonal circle, the higher levels of civic competence the person achieves*.

4. Data collection and operationalization

To answer the research question 'What factors explain the levels of civic competence of EU university students?' the research shall be divided into two steps: 1) *what are the levels of civic competence of the university students?* 2) *what are the factors that possibly explain the measured civic competence?*

4.1. Data collection and sample

For this study we basically used two methods to collect our information. For the first part of our study we undertook a desk research to understand the issue of civic competence and the possible factors behind the competence. The result of this desk research is the theoretical model and the hypotheses as presented in the previous chapter. Next, we have developed a questionnaire to investigate the level of civic competence and the underlying factors among

students from the University of Twente (UT). In this chapter we will describe the sampling as well as the structure and content of the questionnaire.

The units of observation are individual university students and units of analysis are their information provided that reflects their levels of civic competence and personal background. We randomly approached students when they were studying at the campus of UT and approached them with the request to complete a questionnaire about civic competence. The only conditions the students had to meet were that they were adults and were enrolled in one of the UT's bachelor or master programmes. The students were approached in the first two weeks of May 2017. In total 50 UT students agreed to complete the questionnaire, 35 of them completed a hard copy questionnaire and 15 an online version. The students have completed the questionnaire independently from each other. Both questionnaires – hard copy and online (LimeSurvey) – were identical. We have transferred the hard copies into the online version, so basically we have a sample of 50 online questionnaires as input for an SPSS data file (SPSS version 22).

The 50 students that completed the questionnaire vary in age, gender, study programme and nationality (see also the tables in the Appendix). In our sample, 23 (46%) are male and 27 (54%) are female. The age of the respondents varies from 18 to 41, with a mean of approximately 24. We have divided the respondents by age in two main groups: the traditional students in the age cohort 18-24 (64% in our sample) and the 'non-traditional' students (aged over 24 – 36% of the sample). Of the 50 respondents, 64% follow a UT master programme, the other 36% a bachelor programme. The studies they do vary greatly; in total 20 different study programmes, from business administration to mechanical engineering. Also the nationality of the students in our sample varies. In total, more than ten nationalities were included in the sample, which we divided into three groups: Dutch students (52%), EU-students not being Dutch (28%), and non-EU students (20%). Further details about our sample of the 50 UT-students can be found in the Appendix.

4.2. Questionnaire, operationalization and data handling

According to our theoretical model, civic competence can be explained by the following factors: previous civic education, civic experience, family and the immediate community, and

SES (socioeconomic status). Due to the limit of the conditions allowed for the research, we assume that the respondents as adults studying at a research university must have attained a fine level of self-awareness, and therefore we mainly use self-estimated levels of competence to represent the real civic competence. In the remainder of this section we will address civic competence and the explanatory factors in greater detail and describe their operationalization.

These basic concepts from the theoretical model form the basis of (the structure) of the questionnaire. The questionnaire consists of three parts, all having closed questions only. The first part concerns general background information of the students, such as their age, nationality and gender. The second part contains seven multi-item questions to measure civic competence based on the four dimensions from our theoretical model (knowledge, skills, attitude and values – see chapter 3). The third part consists of eight multi-item questions about the explanatory variables from our theoretical model, which are previous civic education, civic experience, family and the immediate community, and SES. For almost all questions in part 2 and 3, we used a five point Likert scales, ranging from 1 to 5. The answering categories from 1 to 5 vary, depending on the way the question were phrased (e.g. from low to high, or from disagree to agree – see questionnaire in the appendix).

With respect to some questions, the answering option ‘no idea / no opinion’ has been added, for instance with respect to the civic competence components ‘Skills’ and ‘Values’. In our analyses we treat these answers as ‘missing’. In the remainder of this chapter, we will elaborate upon the key variables.

4.2.1. Civic competence (dependent variable)

According to our model, the level of civic competence is composed of four different components (Knowledge, Skills, Attitude and Values). With respect to each of these components, we selected a number of items that were asked in the questionnaire. Based on the scores of the items, we created an index score for each component per student – adding the scores of the single items, divided by the number of items. Next, we created an index score of Civic competence for each respondent based on the four components.

With respect to the first component – Knowledge – initially we formulated two sets of questions. The first set contains five questions asking to estimate their knowledge on issues

such as institutions, laws and policies in the EU and the home country (answers could range from 1 (no knowledge) to 5 (extensive knowledge)). The second set has three statements in which the respondents were asked to judge their perceived knowledge about political issues compared to others (answering from strongly disagree to strong agree).

To calculate the knowledge about the civic society, as the first component of civic competence, we have decided to use the first set of questions only (Q7 in the questionnaire). This is we added up the scores of the five items from Q7. For reasons of presentation of the results, we have categorized (relabelled) the index scores on knowledge as follows: Very low knowledge about the civic society =score between 1.00 and 1.80; Low knowledge =score between 1.81 and 2.60; Moderate knowledge=score between 2.61 and 3.40; High knowledge=score between 3.41 and 4.20; Very high knowledge =score between 4.21 and 5.00.

With respect to the second component of civic competence – the possession of skills to engage in civic activities – we selected seven items in the questionnaire. The respondents were asked to what extent they are capable in doing certain activities such as discussing conflicts between countries with fellow students, arguing about controversial political issues, and organizing ‘interest groups’ (see questionnaire for all seven items – Q9). Based on the answers that could range from 1 (not at all) to 5 (very well), we created the index score for ‘Skills’ (adding the seven scores, divided by the number of items). For reasons of presentation, we again relabelled the outcomes, using the same cut off points as above.

For the third component – values associated with social justice – we have selected eight items. Respondents were asked to what extent they agree with statements such as “everyone should always have the right to express their options freely”. In the survey, we use the ‘critical’ stream of civic values as the criterion of measurement. A high level of being ‘critical’ refers to the values that exceed the individual-public conflict but highly honour human rights; being ‘critical’ at a low level corresponds to the ‘civic (republican)’ mode, which weighs the individual autonomy and the public concern proportionately (to some extent); a moderate level of being ‘critical’ corresponds to the ‘liberal’ mode of civic values, which peruses individual autonomy while still respects the common good. Three of the eight items have been re-coded in the opposite direction; it concerns Q10c, Q10d and Q10g. Again

we established an index by adding the scores of the eight items (and again divided by the numbers of items and relabeled in five categories using the same cut off points as above).

With respect to the fourth component of civic competence – attitude towards engagement in politics and social activities – three sets of questions were asked. The first set has four items, asking the respondents to indicate their interest in political issues at various levels (community, nation, EU), with answering possibilities ranging from 1 (highly disinterested) to 5 (highly interested). Based on the scores of these four items, we created the index Civic Attitude 1 (CCA1). The second set has ten items about the respondent's willingness to take part in different sort of political activities (ranging from 1 (not willing at all) to 5 (very much willing)). Based on these ten items we have created the index CCA2. The third set of questions about attitudes concern the willingness of the respondent to take part in various forms of political protest. Also here an index has been created (CCA3).

In order to determine the attitude of the respondents towards civic engagement, we calculated the mean scores of each respondent for each of the three subcomponents of attitude (CCA1, CCA2, and CCA3). These mean scores were added and divided by three and represent the respondent's attitude.

4.2.2. Factors explaining Civic competence (independent variables)

Based on our theoretical model, we distinguish four factors that are supposed to explain the level of civic competence: previous civic education in formal education, civic experience, the impact of family and the immediate community, and personal SES. We will operationalize these four factors below.

With respect to the first factor – previous civic education, we notify the respondents that 'civic education' centers about educating 'ideal citizens' in the society, in forms that vary from courses directly entitled "citizen XXX" to social-related subjects, such as history, law, economics, etc.. We use two questions to depict how the students were educated during lower secondary school in terms of citizenship. The reason why lower secondary school was selected to represent the formal education prior to university study was that civic education is compulsory in most member states of the EU. The first question provides five examples of forms of civic education, such as "taught as a separate subject by teachers of civic related

subjects” and “integrated into all subjects taught at school”, and students respond to each item by answering whether the example fit their previous civic education. The second question asks the students to estimate the seriousness of civic education at lower secondary school on a scale from 1 (very carelessly) to 5 (very seriously).

As for the indicator for the quality of one’s previous civic education, we only use the scores of the second question, because the answers to the first question is intend to depict a general picture of how previous civic education of the students was organized and only provides catagorical data, yet the responses to the second question are numeral and reflect the quality of the issue and thus comparable to the data of the other variables. For reasons of presentation of the results, we have categorized (relabelled) the index scores on previous civic education as follows: Very carelessly =score between 1.00 and 1.80; Carelessly =score between 1.81 and 2.60; Moderate =score between 2.61 and 3.40; Seriously =score between 3.41 and 4.20; Very seriously =score between 4.21 and 5.00.

In terms of the second factor – civic experience – there are six items in the questionnaire. Respondents were asked whether or not they have been involved in the activities given such as “an organization affiliated by political parties or organizations” and “a group of young people campaigning for an issue”, with answering possibilities of “Yes, only in university”, “Yes, only before university”, “Yes, both before and in university” and “No, never”. In accordance with our intention of measuring civic experience by inspecting the frequency of involvement, we code the categories as follows: “Yes, only in university” =1; “Yes, only before university” =1; “Yes, both before and in university” =2; “No, never” =0. For reasons of presentation of the results, we have categorized (relabelled) the index scores on previous civic education as follows: Very limited =score between 1.00 and 1.80; Somewhat limited =score between 1.81 and 2.60; Moderate =score between 2.61 and 3.40; Much =score between 3.41 and 4.20; Very much =score between 4.21 and 5.00.

With respect to the third factor – family and the immediate community – two questions were asked about the openness of discussing social issues (e.g. migration crisis and economic policies) with family members, and the heterogeneity of the communities. In the first question, the students estimate the attitude of their family at discussions about political or social issues on a scale from 1 (strongly oppose) to 5 (strongly favor). The second question

offers nine items to the respondents to estimate the heterogeneity of the communities, from aspects of nationality, language, religion, jobs in the communities before one entered the university (UT), as well as nationality, language, religion, living habits and habit of reasoning in the communities during one's study in the university (UT), ranging from 1 (not diverse / homogeneous) to 5 (very diverse / heterogeneous). In the same way as the other few factors, we established an index by adding the scores of the nine items (and again divided by the numbers of items and relabeled in five categories using the same cut off points as above).

With respect to the fourth factor – SES – two questions were asked. The first one required the respondents to estimate their how their political opinions differentiate from others in a daily circle with possibilities ranging from 1 (do not differ) to 5 (very different). The second one requested students' frequency of being discriminated (from 1 (never) to 5 (very common), with the university as the cutting off point of the time span. Afterwards, the scores for both periods were added up and divided by 2 to generate the indicator for SES of being discriminated. Hereby, we also relabeled the index scores as follows: Never =score between 1.00 and 1.80; Rarely =score between 1.81 and 2.60; Sometimes score between 2.61 and 3.40; Often =score between 3.41 and 4.20; Always =score between 4.21 and 5.00.

5. Results of the study

In this chapter we will present the outcomes of our study. First, we will present the outcomes of the dependent and independent variables and answer the first research question of this study – what are the levels of civic competence of students at UT. Next, we will further analyze our data to find out if we can explain the level of competence of the students. In this part we will address the hypotheses that have been formulated in chapter 3.

5.1. The level of civic competence

5.1.1. The general picture

In the previous chapter we have explained how we measured the level of civic competence by asking the respondents a substantial number of questions about four components, which compose the level of civic competence. We will start to present the

findings with respect to these four components, and after that answer the question about the level of civic competence (the total score).

In table 2 you will find the outcomes in terms of frequencies with respect to the four components of civic competence.

Table 2: The level of civic competence of UT students, by component and in total (frequencies in %)

	Knowledge	Skills	Values	Attitude	CC overall
1	0	4.0	0	4.0	0
2	16.0	22.0	6.1	18.0	4.0
3	50.0	26.0	6.1	62.0	54.0
4	26.0	34.0	40.8	14.0	32.0
5	8.0	14.0	46.9	2.0	10.0
N	50	50	49	50	50
Mean	3.35	3.33	4.02	3.04	3.43
Std. Deviation	.65	.82	.61	.605	.50

Note: Read ‘1’ respectively as ‘not knowledgeable at all’, ‘not skillful at all’, ‘highly intolerable’, ‘intention of very low engagement’, and ‘very low’.

As we can see, about half of the students have a moderate level of cognitive competence and 34% state that their knowledge of political institutions and issues is (very) high. This implies that few from our sample believe that his or her knowledge about institutions and policies is very low and that hardly anyone does not understand such issues, at least to some degree.

The majority of the students from our sample also hold the opinion that they possess the skills for civicness, such as thinking actively, joining elections and expressing opinions publicly; 48% state that they are capable of discussing controversial issues and the like. On the other hand, about a quarter think that they do not have such skills.

Regarding values for making judgement on civic issues, most respondents fit in the ‘critical/cosmopolitan’ mode of citizenship that is highly supportive to human rights while very sceptical at the authoritative intervention in the name of ‘common good’. The

respondents however are cautious at taking actions in the civic society, with 16% being active.

The majority of respondents have high or very high level of being ‘critical’ in making judgments in civic issues, such as gender equality, immigrant-native conflicts over culture and work, and individual-government conflicts over autonomy. This means that many students prefer human rights of the individuals, such as freedom of speech, privacy and equality of work, compared to the supremacy of the government in the name of ‘common good’, even in the scenario that the security of the country is threatened.

The total level of civic competence of the students from our sample, based on the four components, shows that based on their assessments 42% believe that their level of civic competence is (very) high. The number of respondents that believe that their civic competence is (very) low is very low (4%).

5.1.2. Civic competence of students in greater detail

Are there any differences among groups of students that we can distinguish in our sample? Does the level of civic competence differ by gender, age, nationality or type of study? We will explore these questions for each of the four components as well as for the total level of civic competence.

Table 3: The level of civic competence, by gender, age, study level and nationality (mean scores on 5-point scale)

		Knowledge	Skills	Values	Attitude	CC overall
Gender	Male	3.48	3.50	3.93	2.97	3.48
	Female	3.25	3.19	4.10	3.10	3.40
	N	50	50	49	50	50
Age	Traditional	3.43	3.16	3.90	2.96	3.36
	Non-trad.	3.23	3.63	4.24	3.18	3.55
	N	50	50	49	50	50
Study level	Bachelor	3.28	3.24	4.00	3.07	3.40

	Master	3.40	3.38	4.03	3.02	3.45
	N	50	50	49	50	50
Nationality	Dutch	3.22	3.25	3.92	2.85	3.30
	Other EU	3.61	3.46	4.05	3.29	3.60
	Non-EU	3.34	3.34	4.21	3.20	3.53
	N	50	50	49	50	50

In the table above, the scores of the different groups are presented by the mean scores on the four components and the total level of civic competence. To determine if significant differences exist we use the independent samples t-test and the one-way ANOVA in SPSS*. It turns out that the traditional students (age cohort 18-24) believe that they have more civic skills than the older students (aged over 24). With respect to the other aspects, we did not find any significant difference in civic competence, or its components, in terms of age, gender, study level or nationality.

When we look into each component of civic competence, we have some interesting findings.

Firstly, for Knowledge – how much do our respondents know – we include more EU-knowledge than the general knowledge, so expected that the Europeans including the Dutch know more than the other nationalities. The results however, indicate that the Dutch respondents have the lowest level of mastery of civic knowledge among the respondents by nationality. In fact the Dutch respondents rank the lowest in most competences. Nevertheless, in the ANOVA test for independent samples, from all of the four dimensions of civic competence, the difference between the Dutch and other European students is not significant, neither is it significant when assessing the non-European-versus-Dutch difference or non-European-versus-European difference.

Secondly, for the participatory attitude, many students are willing or very enthusiastic at formal voting in elections. However, students are reluctant or even resistant at either helping a candidate in a political campaign or standing as a candidate himself or herself. For informal

* The data for the variables of interest meet the assumptions for parametric tests.

participation there are also variations. With 60% students being quite willing to share views on political or social issues with fellows, more than half of the students are unwilling or resistant to join an online forum. Social organizations and volunteer work are popular among students, with each winning the acceptance of more than half or nearly half of the respondents.

In addition, when asked about the attitude at different ways how citizens may protest against things they believe are wrong, the formal and direct way of protesting—contacting an elected candidate, taking part in a peaceful march or rally, and collecting signatures for a petition—many students do not show interest. For most informal ways of protesting, the majority of the students are reluctant or very reluctant too, e.g. posting disagreements on social media, writing to a newspaper and wearing a badge or T-shirt expressing opinions. The exception for informal protests is that a number of respondents show clear willingness at choosing not to buy certain products.

Thirdly, regarding values – how ‘critical’ are our respondents - many students highly value free speech and gender equality, with 86% students supporting or strongly supporting free speech and 88% students supporting or strongly supporting gender equality in every aspect of social life. When it comes to the conflicting situation between the government and individuals, there is an obvious tendency to oppose the government’s intervention in individual issues. Taking the immigration issue for example, the objection by 64% students to the restriction to immigration due to a shrinking labor market is clear. Similar results also occur in the case that security agencies are permitted to check anyone’s privacy and the case of the government control the public media.

However, this does not mean that they are definitely ‘cosmopolitan’, in a way that prioritize absolute human rights over prevailing political or social constructions. This is indicated in the comparison between the strong objection to the restriction on immigration and the awkwardness in respecting the custom of the immigrants and the natives. The neutral rate of 42% at whether immigrants shall be respected when they keep their original custom in a new country, which shows the hesitation of balancing the respect to ‘the others’ and the privilege of ‘us’.

In this way, it can be concluded that the students are strongly ‘critical’ at weighing the values between individuals and the government, yet are not strongly ‘critical’ at handling conflicts between ‘we’ and ‘the others’.

5.2. Factors explaining civic competence

In our theoretical model, we distinguished four factors that might explain civic competence. In this section we present the outcomes of these four factors.

5.2.1. Previous civic education

Since the types of questions for this issue are different we need a slightly different approach. First, we present the outcomes of Q19. It turns out that almost all of the respondents have received this type of education in one way or another, although the forms in which it was taught vary. Only 10% (5 students) state that they have not had this type of education (see the table below).

Table 4: Distribution of forms of previous civic education (N=50, frequencies in %)

Forms	Yes	No
Taught as a separate course	46.0	54.0
Taught by teachers of subjects related to human and social sciences	80.0	20.0
Integrated into all subjects	24.0	76.0
As an extra-curricular activity	8.0	92.0
Embedded in the school experience as a whole	62	38

Next, I would present the outcomes of Q20, the seriousness of the education. The conclusion with respect for this variable ‘previous civic education’ would be that almost all of them received civic education at their secondary school in one way or another but many hold the opinion that the seriousness of this education was moderate at best. More than a third believed that it was not taught (very) seriously (see Table 5).

Table 5: Distribution of seriousness of previous civic education (N=50, frequencies in %)

Level of seriousness	Percent
Very carelessly	10.0
Carelessly	26.0
Neutral	46.0
Seriously	18.0
Total	100.0

For the further analysis (regressions) we only use Q20 (seriousness) as the indicator for ‘previous civic education’ and keep Q19 at a descriptive level only.

5.2.2. Civic experience

In terms of the second factor – civic experience – generally speaking, civic experience out of school education is not common among the respondents. Except 2% of them that have much experience in civic activities, 78% students have very little experience, including voluntary work in the communities, study associations and etc. either during or before the university (see the table below).

Table 6: Civic experience overall (N=50, frequencies in %)

Civic experience	Percent
Very limited	44.0
Somewhat limited	34.0
Moderate	20.0
Much	0
Very much	2.0
Total	100.0

When we look into the details, we see that among those that have participated in civic activities, informal organizations and activities that concern studies, leisure hobbies and community service are popular among the students, especially during their study in the university. In contrast, organizations or activities that are formal and politics-related receive little attention from our respondents. These ‘serious’ forms of civic participation include

having the membership of an organization based on political goals or ethnicity, as well as joining a group of young people campaigning for an issue.

5.2.3. Family and the immediate community

The third factor concerns social structures that are closely surrounding the individuals and thus consists of the family and the immediate community. Particularly we measure the flexibility of the family and heterogeneity of the community.

Firstly, most families of the respondents have a good flexibility with regard to discussions about political or social issues, with 74% willing or more than willing to serious topics about the civic society at home. Secondly, with regard to the heterogeneity of the community, the communities during university study appear to be more heterogeneous than the communities before the university. In the communities before the university, jobs and occupations are the main source of heterogeneity, while in the communities during students' university study, nationalities, languages and habits of living are the main sources of heterogeneity. That means a common change of community heterogeneity upon entering the university.

5.2.4. SES (Socioeconomic status)

The last factor is the socioeconomic status of the individual. According to our measurement on the difference of political opinions and the experience of being discriminated, we found that no respondents thought their political opinions were either extremely different in the group or very much the same as others.

There are 64% students that report to have never been discriminated and nobody reports to live in a circle where discrimination is very common. However, 10% students often or from time to time suffer from discrimination. Some respondents claimed to have been discriminated and provided their thoughts on the reasons of discrimination. According to their responses, most cases of discrimination are related to gender and race.

5.3 Testing the hypotheses

5.3.1. General picture

Our first hypothesis refers to the previous civic education and the level of civic competence. We assume that students that have higher level of previous civic education with regard to the seriousness should have a higher level of civic competence. We conducted a bivariate regression test to civic competence and the indicators for possible factors[†]. It turns out that there is no significant correlation between one's civic competence and his or her previous civic education.

Our second hypothesis refers to one's civic experience and the level of civic competence. Our assumption is that the more experience one has in civic activities, the higher chances one receives high scores in the test of civic competence. Following the same analysis as the test for previous civic education, we do not see a significant correlation between civic experience and civic competence.

Our third and fourth hypotheses expect two monotonically increasing relationships. One is that the more flexible one's family (or the relationship with the Guardians) in terms of serious discussion about social or political topics, the higher level of civic competence the person shall achieve. The parametric test however does not indicate a significant correlation between the flexibility of the family and civic competence. The other is that a high heterogeneity in the immediate community is helpful to the growth of one's civic competence. As is shown in the following table, there is a linear correlation between the overall civic competence and heterogeneity of the community, which means that community heterogeneity (e.g. language, nationality and habits) is helpful to one's civic competence.

Table 7: Bivariate regression analysis of the independent variables on Civic competence (n=50)

Independent value	Beta [‡]	t-value	P	Adj. R ²	F
Community heterogeneity overall	.26 (.20)	1.85	.04	.05	3.42

The last hypothesis expects a correlation between civic competence and SES (socioeconomic status) of the individual. Particularly it assumes that someone that is easily

[†] The variables of interest meet the requirement for conducting a parametric test.

[‡] The first coefficient is the standardized coefficient, between brackets the unstandardized b is presented.

differentiated or often marginalized in the interpersonal circle tends to have higher levels of civic competence. We fail to justify this hypothesis statistically.

5.3.2. Detailed picture / further analyses

Besides the associations between the overall indicator for civic competence and the factors, we also look for other explanatory relationships between the competences and related factors.

A significant correlation is sensed between the overall civic competence and heterogeneity of the community before university (see table below).

Table 8: Bivariate regression analysis of the independent variables on Civic competence (n=50)

Independent value	Beta [§]	t-value	P	Adj. R ²	F
Community heterogeneity before university	.29 (.16)	2.07	.02	.06	4.27

Besides, as Table 10 shows, the heterogeneity of the community before university also has a close association with Civic competence – Knowledge. Possibly due to the relationship between heterogeneity before university and the overall heterogeneity, the statistical correlation between the general heterogeneity and Knowledge is also identified to be significant.

Table 9: Bivariate regression analysis of the independent variables on Knowledge (n=50)

Independent value	Beta ^{**}	t-value	P	Adj. R ²	F
Community heterogeneity before university	.35 (.25)	2.59	.01	.10	6.72
Community heterogeneity overall	.37 (.38)	2.79	.00	.12	7.78

In fact, these two statistical correlations may mean the same thing. Because the general civic competence is directly composed of Knowledge, a strong influence on Knowledge will possibly affect civic competence statistically. In other words, the heterogeneity of the community before university is an influential factor to one's civic competence via influencing the cognitive aspect of civic competence.

[§] The first coefficient is the standardized coefficient, between brackets the unstandardized b is presented.

^{**} The first coefficient is the standardized coefficient, between brackets the unstandardized b is presented.

6. Conclusions

This chapter is the wrapping up section of the thesis. It starts from a summary of the research, so as to guide the readers back to the context of the whole research. Next are the answers that our research gives to the research questions of the whole study. The last part relates the results of the empirical study to the initial expectations of the research, presents several points of personal reflection on the entire process, and discusses some ideas for future research.

6.1. A summary about the research

The idea of this research originated from the concern for a competitive European Union in the era of growing interconnection and challenges in various fields and forms. In order to thrive with its democratic tradition from the citizen level, the EU has been making effort in promoting the European citizenship and enhancing the competence of the citizens since (as late as) the Treaty of Maastricht. Nowadays, the EU has established a complex system that covers education, community and legislation for improving the civic competence of the European citizens, but most researches hugely focus on citizens at lower secondary school or younger, with few sparing an eye on the young adults with regard to the up-to-date situation of the EU civic competence. Therefore, starting from the concern for the EU citizenship and the curiosity at the group of the young adults, this thesis narrows down to EU university students and seeks to answer the following questions: What are the levels of civic competence of these young adults and what factors can possibly explain the civic competence of EU university students?

In order to measure civic competence, we sort out three streams of conceptualizing ‘citizenship’, namely the liberal mode, the civic / republican mode, and the critical / cosmopolitan mode. In merging these three popular streams of citizenship and the EU’s increasing interest in the critical / cosmopolitan mode of citizenship, we adjust the commonly applied IEA-ICCS framework to the university level. This framework conceptualizes civic competence in four dimensions – knowledge, skills, attitude and values. Accordingly, we expect that a person with high civic competence to be: 1) well acknowledged of political and social facet of the community including the local level, the national level, the EU level and a

broader international level; 2) skilful at taking part in civic activities, including formal ones like voting for a representative at the Parliament and informal ones like voluntary work; 3) critical at issues concerning human rights, with or without the scenario of a conflicting relationship between the authorities and the individuals, the majority and the minority, etc.; 4) proactive at taking actions in the civic society. The results of the study show that many of our respondents are equipped with a fine level of civic competence.

Regarding the explanatory part of the research, the ‘political literacy’ theories are used as the main theory to outline the three approaches of explaining the levels of civic competence – the cognitive approach, the social agents approach, and the structural approach. Based on that, we identify four factors that may affect one’s civic competence – previous civic education, civic experience, family and the immediate community, and personal SES (socioeconomic status). Accordingly, we put forward five hypotheses: 1) The higher seriousness of one’s previous civic education, the higher levels of civic competence the person has; 2) The more experience a person has with civic activities, the higher levels of civic competence one has; 3) The more heterogeneous the immediate community, the higher levels of civic competence the person achieves; 4) The more flexible one’s family or guardians with regard to political or social topics, the better environment may be for the development of civic competence; 5) The more marginalization one experiences in the interpersonal circle, the higher levels of civic competence one achieves. We use questionnaires to investigate the level of civic competence and the underlying factors among students at the University of Twente (UT).

6.2. Answers to the research questions

The first research question is: *What are the levels of civic competence of EU university students?* In terms of the overall score for civic competence, many respondents have a fine level of civic competence, with 54% of them having a moderate level and 42% reaching high or very high level. Regarding the four contributing competences – knowledge, skills, attitude and values, the average score for attitude is the lowest, with only 16% reaching a (very) high level. Compared with our imagination about an ‘ideal citizen’, we find that our respondents are mostly ‘knowledgeable’ at politics and social issues at different levels of society, skilful

yet rather passive at participating in civic activities when necessary and eligible, and critical at the supremacy of the authorities in relation to the rights and autonomy of the individuals.

The second research question is: *What are the factors that can possibly explain the measured civic competence?* The statistical results of the research only show significant relationship between the overall civic competence and the heterogeneity of the community. The data also suggest that the heterogeneity in the communities, especially community heterogeneity before university has an impact on some aspects of civic competence, i.e. knowledge about politics and social issues on different levels. Even though a few respondents in the research are non-EU citizens, nationality does not have an impact on their performance in the investigation, and neither does gender, age or study levels.

According to the explanatory theories that we introduced in chapter 3, the 'structural' approach best explains our finding about the impact of community heterogeneity. The rationale of the story is that a person's civic competence is shaped by the interconnection inbetween different agents and the atmosphere of the entire community, particularly in contrast to the impact of any sole social agent or the person's own factors. Another example is that while 60% students are quite willing to share their views on political or social issues with fellows, more than half of the students are unwilling or resistant to join an online forum. This implies that when the university students are choosing the way to express their opinions on the society, the interpersonal closeness in real life weighs more than the accessibility and convenience in the cyber space. Those findings of our empirical study and the structural theory underly the importance of the immediate community. It suggests that an effective promotion of civic competence among the (EU) university students has to be comprehensive, including preparation since one's adolescence and efforts on different aspects of community life.

In terms of the other hypothesized factors, although our tests do not indicate their influence on civic competence, it may only mean that there is no linear correlation, while it is possible that they do have connection with civic competence either in general or on particular aspects.

6.3. Reflection

Looking back at the intention of this thesis, we conclude that this research has reached the intended goal of investigating the up-to-date civic competence of EU university students and of exploring the explanatory factors, by collecting first-hand data from the expected respondents and evaluating the statistical relationship between civic competence and the factors. From the scientific aspect, this research provides information about a new group – the young adults in the universities, and develops a theoretical framework for measuring the civic competence of a relatively older group of people in the contemporary era, adding to the richness of the general picture of civic competence in the EU. From the social aspect, this research presents the timely phenomena of how the young adults behave in the civic society, which shall be informative to those who are interested at the civic facet of the European society.

In addition to the statistic findings, there are some points with regard to how the research was conducted that worth discussing, which may provide avenues for future research.

Firstly, due to the limitation of time and capability, the research was conducted within a short time (e.g. the data collecting period took only two weeks), and was narrowed to one university in the Netherlands – University of Twente (UT). This may result in the difficulty in detecting some features of the variables and the correlation between the variables, which are valuable but not obvious. To improve the quality of both the design of the research and the data, there are a few ways to follow, for example: 1) increase the number of UT students; 2) compare the students at UT and students at a different university. Considering the impact of heterogeneity of the immediate community that this research distinguishes, it would be interesting to conduct the research among young adults from very divergent communities, for example: 1) conducting the research among university students studying in large cities, where heterogeneity is the common situation; 2) comparing university students at different universities with different levels of internationalization. Furthermore, we could also apply the research beyond research universities, such as young adults at applied science schools in the Netherlands or those who have started full-time works upon graduation from higher secondary school.

The other drawback of our research due to similar reasons, and especially the survey, is that we rely on the respondents' self-assessment about their competence, which is based on the assumption that the adults are capable of doing self-assessments. That could improve the efficiency of collecting data for an already-complex survey as such, but meanwhile raise the risk to the accuracy of the data. That problem can be improved by having a test on the respondents' real mastery on issues of interest, but most of the time this is applicable when there is a clear line of being 'right' or 'wrong', as well as when the objective condition allows.

Secondly, although this thesis talks about civic competence beyond the sense of traditional politics and includes social perspectives as well as the contemporary social trends (e.g. the questionnaire enlists commenting on the social media as a form of civic participation), it is necessary that future researchers add to the timely society-related content. That is because nowadays politics and the society have been increasingly interrelated, while the civil society itself has been evolving rapidly and keeps involving complexities, which means a continuing challenge to a competitive society, and hence the criteria for being a 'qualified' citizen shall keep being updated. For instance, an increase of society-related content means that compared with people in the previous era, an ideal citizen shall acquire knowledge from a wider range (e.g., 3D printing), and shall be more skilful at handling information and making decisions in the civil society.

In spite of the thrilling side of social complexities, the other side of the story means great challenges to the future researchers. First of all, a great amount of effort and patience is in need to ensure the quality of the data. Next, theories should give sufficient support to the design of the research, in terms of deciding the criteria of selecting certain aspects or items for inspection, as long as the study takes the complexity of the civil society into consideration. Moreover, it sets high requirements to the methodology and mathematical knowledge and techniques. Compared with this thesis that largely simplifies the empirical work to a questionnaire and basic statistic analysis, a comprehensive research needs much more attention to adjust the weight in calculation and to approach the respondents with questions of (probably) divergent topics.

While it takes great effort in standardizing the measurement just in order to accurately measure such an all-compassing concept among the divergent young adults, an alternative methodology is qualitative instead of quantitative methods, e.g. interviews instead of like questionnaires. Interviews could take much time in collecting and sorting the data, but would be helpful to investigate the ‘soft’ variables. For example, in the interview about civic experience, the respondents can briefly explain which field her or his organization belongs to, as well as what role they play in the civic experience, so that the researchers decide the level of civic engagement: a ‘deep’ level of civic engagement refers to actions that well correspond to the initiated goals of the organization or activity, in contrast to ‘peripheral’ participation such as doing cleaning for a protest.

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Appendix A.

The Operationalization Scheme for Measuring Civic Competence and the Explanatory Factors

Theoretical Concept	Variable	Definition (context related)	Measurement	Data Collection
Civic competence	Knowledge	<p>Knowledge that prepares citizens for active and constructive civic participation, namely the acknowledgement of how the political and legal framework of one’s own nation and EU look like.</p> <p>This perspective believes that cognitive learning about the civic society is essential to constructive civic participation. That admits the possibility that meaningful civic actions can be not constructive enough without sufficient knowledge backup.</p>	<p>Q7. Please estimate your knowledge about the following topics on a scale from 1(nothing) to 5 (very much).</p> <p>a) Laws and policies of the European Union</p> <p>b) Institutions of the European Union (e.g. European Parliament)</p> <p>c) Up-to-date political and social events in the EU</p> <p>d) Up-to-date political and social events in your home country</p> <p>e) Institutions of your home country (e.g. the Parliament)</p> <p>Q8. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Indicate that on the scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).</p> <p>a) I know more about politics than most people of my age</p> <p>b) When political issues or problems are being discussed, I usually have something to say</p> <p>c) I am able to understand most political issues easily</p>	- All via survey.
	Skills	<p>Skills needed for active civic participation.</p> <p>Besides an understanding of the rationale of political voting, community campaign, voluntary work and legal actions, which is deeper than merely</p>	<p>Q9. To what extent do you think you are capable of doing the following activities? Indicate that on the scale from 1 (not at all) to 5 (very well).</p> <p>a) Discuss about a conflict between countries with fellow</p>	

‘acknowledgement’, civic skills emphasize the capability of taking autonomous decisions and critical thinking.

students

- b) Argue your point of view about a controversial political or social issue
- c) Stand as a candidate in a (school) election
- d) Organise a group of students in order to achieve changes at school/university
- e) Comment on a controversial issue on social media
- f) Write an opinion letter to a newspaper giving your view on a current issue
- g) Speak in front of your class about a social or political issue

Values

Values associated with social justice.

In civic society, civic values reflect one’s principles of deciding what is justifiable or unjustifiable for the social common good. These principles are affective preparation for the evaluation of the interpersonal relations in the external environment, which may further affect one’s civic practise.

In the survey, we use the ‘critical’ mode of civic values as the criterion of measurement. A high level of being ‘critical’ refers to the values that exceed the individual-public conflict but highly honour human rights; being ‘critical’ at a low level corresponds to the ‘civic (republican)’ mode of civic values, which weighs the individual autonomy and the public concern proportionately (to some extent); a moderate level of

Q10. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Indicate that on the scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

- a) Everyone should always have the right to express their opinions freely
 - c) People should always be free to criticise the government publicly
 - d) Security agencies should be allowed to check phone calls and emails of anyone suspected of threatening national security
 - e) When faced with violent threats to national security, the government should have the power to control what appears in the media
 - f) Men and women should have the same rights in every way
-

	being ‘critical’ corresponds to the ‘liberal’ mode of civic values, which peruses individual autonomy while still respects the common good.	g) Immigrants should have the opportunity to continue their own customs and lifestyle h) When there are not many jobs available, immigration should be restricted
Attitude	<p>The intention to engage in politics and social activities.</p> <p>The types of activities covered are broad, including national policies, protests and volunteering. Ideally, this aspect of civic competence shall be backed up by the other three aspects; otherwise an ‘active’ participatory attitude is random and meaningless for democracy.</p>	<p>Q11. Please indicate your interest in the following topics, on a scale from 1 (very disinterested) to 5 (very interested).</p> <p>a) Political issues within your current community b) Political or social issues in your home country c) Politics in non-EU regions (other than your home country, if you are not from EU countries) d) Politics on the EU level</p> <p>Q12. Please indicate your willingness of taking part in the following activities (suppose that you are eligible for all of them), on a scale from 1 (very resistant) to 5 (very enthusiastic).</p> <p>a) Vote in local elections b) Vote in national elections c) Vote in European elections d) Help a candidate or party during an election campaign e) Stand as a candidate in local elections f) Join an organisation for mainly a social cause g) Talk to fellows about your views on political and social issues h) Write to a newspaper about political and social issues</p>

-
- i) Join an online discussion forum about social and political issues
 - j) Help people in the local community as a volunteer

Q13. Would you take part in any of the following forms of protest? Indicate that on a scale from 1 (I would certainly not do this) to 5 (I would certainly do this).

- a) Posting your disagreements on social media
- b) Writing a letter/email to a newspaper
- c) Wearing a badge or t-shirt expressing your opinion
- d) Contacting an elected representative
- e) Taking part in a peaceful march or rally
- f) Collecting signatures for a petition
- g) Choosing not to buy certain products
- h) Spray-painting protest slogans on walls
- i) Blocking traffic
- j) Occupying public buildings

Factor a) Previous civic education	Seriousness of previous civic education	Civic education centres about educating ‘ideal citizens’ in the society. Its forms vary from courses directly entitled “citizen XXXX” to social-related subjects, such as history, geography, law, economics, etc. Forms of previous formal education about civic issues at primary and secondary schools, together with the seriousness of such education.	Q19. At lower secondary school, how was “civic education” proceeded? a) It is taught as a separate subject by teachers of civic related subjects b) It is taught by teachers of subjects related to human and social sciences (e.g. history, geography, law, economics, etc.) c) It is integrated into all subjects taught at school d) It is an extra-curricular activity
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			<p>e) Related course(s) is/are embedded in the school experience as a whole</p> <p>Q20. In your opinion, how seriously was ‘civic education’ perceived in your lower secondary school? Please indicate that on a scale from 1 (very carelessly) to 5 (very seriously).</p>
Factor b) Civic experience	Frequency of involvement in civic activities	Frequency of engagement in civic experience at civic social associations, and/or particular social activities and events.	<p>Q21. Have you ever been involved in activities of any of the following organisations, clubs or groups? (Yes, only in university; Yes, only before university; Yes, both before and in university; No, never)</p> <p>a) An organization affiliated by political parties or organizations</p> <p>d) A voluntary group doing something to help the community</p> <p>c) An organization based on ethnicity (e.g. the same national, racial, or cultural origins)</p> <p>d) A group of young people campaigning for an issue</p> <p>e) A student association about study subjects</p> <p>f) A student association for leisure hobbies or culture events</p>
Factor c) Family and the immediate community	Heterogeneity of the community	Heterogeneity in one’s immediate community, regarding race, religion, language, political positions, age, occupation and etc.	<p>Q18. To what extent are the people living in your community diverse? Please indicate that on a scale from 1 (not diverse/homogeneous) to 5 (very diverse/heterogeneous).</p> <p>- The community before you went to university</p>

			Nationality Language Religion Jobs/occupation - The community/classes during your stay in university Nationality Language Religion Living habits Habit of reasoning
	Flexibility / Openness of the family	Flexibility of the climate of one's family and the immediate community, such as the political and social tolerance of the parents, and emotional closeness in the family and the immediate community.	Q17. At home, how open do/did your family/guardians talk about social issues (e.g. migration crisis and economic policies)? Please indicate that on a scale from 1 (very resistant) to 5 (very welcoming).
Factor d) SES	Experience of being marginalized or discriminated	The extent to which the person is a 'minority' in the immediate communities or groups with regard to one's political positions. The experience of not being allowed to take part in a social/public activity due to discrimination.	Q14. To what extent do your political opinions differentiate from your fellow students? Please indicate that on a scale from 1 (do not differ) to 5 (very different). Q15. In your experience, how frequent do/did you feel being discriminated? Please indicate that on a scale from 1 (never) to 5 (very common). - Before you went to university 1-5 - During university 1-5 Q16. Optional: If you have been discriminated, what do you think was/were the reason(s)?

Appendix B. Descriptive results of background information and dependent variables

1. Background information

Q1. Year and month of birth

The age of respondents ranges from 18 to 41, with a mean of approximately 24 (Figure 1). Around 70% respondents are aged from 19 to 24 and fall in the category of “traditional” university students.

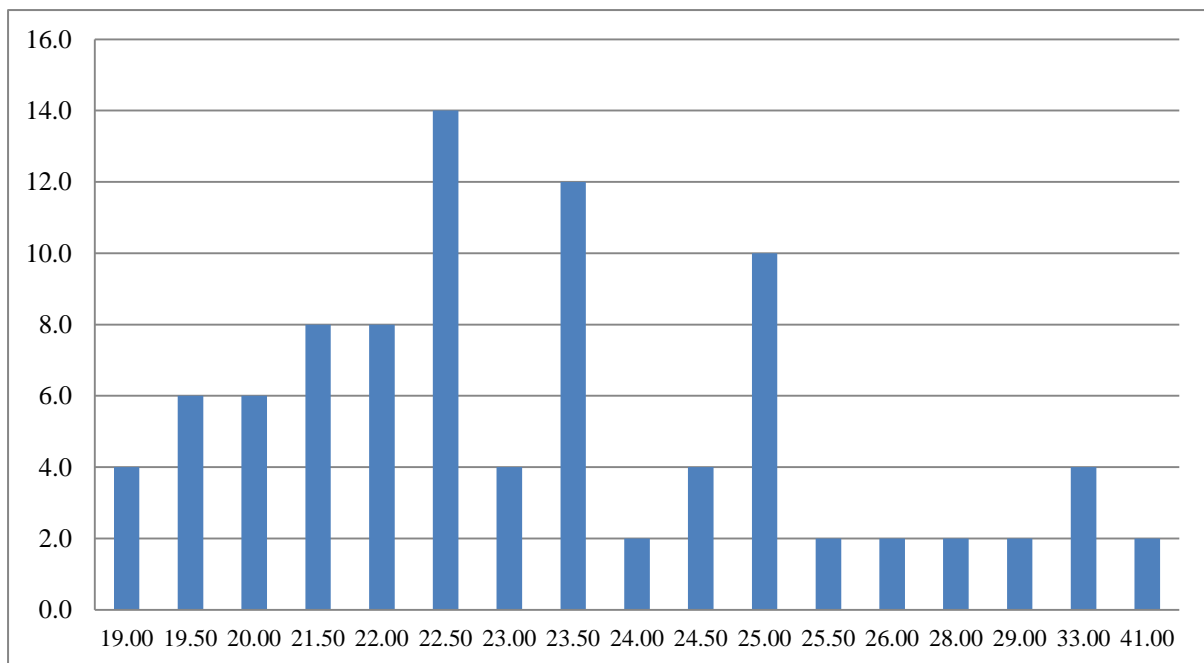


Figure 1: Distribution of the age of the respondents (N=50, frequencies in %)

Q2. Gender

The gender distribution of the data is proportionate (Table 1). There are 23 male and 27 female.

Table 1: Distribution of the gender of the respondents (N=50)

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	23	46.0
Female	27	54.0
Total	50	100.0

Q3. Bachelor or Master

More master students than bachelor students respond to the questionnaire (Table 2).

Table 2: Distribution of Bachelor/Master of the respondents (N=50)

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Bachelor	18	36.0
Master	32	64.0

Total	50	100.0
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Q4. Study Programme

The respondents come from a wide range of studies, such as Civil Engineering, Computer Science and International Business Administration (Table below).

Table 3: Distribution of study programmes of the respondents (N=50)

Study programme	Frequency	Percent
Applied Mathematics	2	4.0
Biomedical Engineering	2	4.0
Business Administration	4	8.0
Business and IT	1	2.0
Civil Engineering	1	2.0
Communication Science	1	2.0
Computer Science	3	6.0
Electrical Engineering	2	4.0
European Public Administration	3	6.0
Global and European Studies	7	14.0
Industrial Design Engineering	1	2.0
Industrial Engineering	1	2.0
Industrial Engineering and Management	5	10.0
International Business Administration	5	10.0
Mechanical Engineering	4	8.0
Process and Chemical Engineering	1	2.0
Psychology	4	8.0
Public Administration	1	2.0
Sustainable Energy Technology	1	2.0
Technical Medicine and Applied Mathematics	1	2.0
Total	50	100.0

Q5. Nationality

Students with various nationalities responded to the research. Half the respondents hold Dutch citizenship (Table 4). There are 15 respondents who have a non-Dutch European citizenship and 10 respondents who hold non-EU citizenship.

Table 4: Distribution of the nationalities of the respondents (N=50)

Nationality	Frequency	Percent
Dutch	26	52.0
other European	14	28.0
non-European	10	20.0

Q6. Language with parents

Almost half of the responding students speak Dutch with their parents or guardians (Table 5).

Table 5: Language that the students speak with Parents or Guardians (N=50)

Language	Percent
Azerbaijan/Turkish/Russian	2.0
Chinese	6.0
Dutch	48.0
Dutch and English	2.0
Dutch/ Suriname	2.0
English	2.0
French	2.0
German	14.0
German and Polish	2.0
German and Russian	2.0
Greek	2.0
Indonesian	2.0
Italian	2.0
Polish	2.0
Spanish	6.0
Turkish	2.0
Vietnamese	2.0
Total	100.0

2. Civic Competence (CC)

2.1. Civic competence – Knowledge

Q7. Knowledge about politics at different levels (CCK1)

About half of the students have a moderate level of cognitive competence and 34% state that their knowledge of political institutions and issues is (very) high. This implies that almost few from our sample believe that his or her knowledge about institutions and policies is very low and that hardly anyone does not understand such issues, at least to some degree.

Table 6: Levels of CCK1 by item (N=50, in frequencies %)

Item	Very low	Low	Moderate	High	Very high	Mean	Std. Deviation
CCK1	0	16.0	50.0	26.0	8.0	3.36	.65
Laws and politics	8.00	32.0	40.0	18.0	2.0	2.74	.92
EU institutions	10.0	26.0	34.0	22.0	8.0	2.92	1.10
EU events	4.0	22.0	34.0	36.0	4.0	3.14	.95
Home country politics	0	2.0	26.0	48.0	24.0	3.94	.77
Home country institutions	0	0	22.0	52.0	26.0	4.04	.70

Q7. CCK1: a) Laws and politics of the European Union

According to students' self-assessment, one fifth of the students know much about laws and politics of the EU and 40% students have little or very little knowledge about laws and politics of the EU. Another 40% of the students have a moderate level of learning about EU laws and politics (Table 9).

Q7. CCK1: b) EU institutions

According to students' self-assessment, about 30% students know much or very much about EU institutions, such as the European Parliament, and 36% students know little or very little about EU institutions

Q7. CCK1: c) EU events

According to students' self-assessment, over 70% of them have at least some knowledge about the up-to-date political and social events in the EU.

Q7. CCK1: d) Home country politics

According to students' self-assessment, most students keep up well with up-to-date political and social events in their home country, with only 2% of respondents saying that they know little about the recent political or social events in their home countries.

Q7. CCK1: e) Home country institutions

All students have some knowledge about the public institutions in their home countries, such as Parliament, with over half of them know much or very much.

Q8. Mastery (CCK2)

Overall, most students are confident that they know the political or social facet of the EU and their home countries at a moderate level or higher. Nearly 60% students are confident that they have a high level of understanding of political or social issues in the EU and their home countries. Detailed scores of CCK2 are calculated from the following items and presented in the matrixes of Table 7.

Table 7: Levels of CCK2 by item (frequencies in %)

Item	Very low	Low	Moderate	High	Very high	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
CCK2	2.0	6.0	34.0	36.0	22.0	50	3.70	.95
Know more than fellows	2.1	16.7	39.6	33.3	8.3	48	3.29	.92
Hold opinions during political discussions	0	8.2	22.4	44.9	24.5	49	3.86	.89
Understand political issues	0	8.0	24.0	54.0	14.0	50	3.74	.80

Q8. CCK2: a) I know more about politics than most people of my age

Around 40% of the respondents think that they know more about politics than most people of their age. This shows the confidence on their cognitive civic competence.

Q8. CCK2: b) Hold opinions in political discussions

Nearly 70% of the respondents have something to say when political issues or problems are being discussed. Those respondents who strongly agree that they generate their own thoughts account for one fifth of the sample. It is reasonable to believe that they are active in the thinking aspect of political engagement.

Q8. CCK2: c) Understand political issues

More than half of the respondents are confident that their capability of understanding political issues has reached a good level.

2.2. Civic competence – Skills (CCS)

Overall, more than 70% of the students have achieved no lower than the moderate level. Almost half the students are at least highly skillful at actively participating in the civil society, such as thinking actively, joining elections and expressing opinions in public. Detailed scores of CCS overall are calculated from the following items and presented in the matrixes of Table 8.

Table 8: CCS by item (frequencies in %)

Item	Very low	Low	Moderate	High	Very high	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
CCS overall	4.0	22.0	26.0	34.0	14.0	50	3.33	.82
Discuss about conflicts	2.0	16.0	24.0	40.0	18.0	50	3.56	1.03
Argue over controversy	0	10.0	20.0	36.0	34.0	50	3.94	.98
Stand as a candidate	12.0	26.0	38.0	16.0	8.0	50	2.82	1.10
Organize students	8.2	22.4	36.7	24.5	8.2	49	3.02	1.07
Comment on social media	10.4	22.9	22.9	37.5	6.3	48	3.06	1.14
Write to the media	12.0	16.0	20.0	30.0	22.0	50	3.34	1.32
Speak in class	8.0	8.0	30.0	34.0	20.0	50	3.50	1.15

Q9. CCS: a) Discuss about conflicts with fellow students

Many respondents (58%) claim to be able to discuss about a conflict between countries with fellow students at a high or higher level.

Q9. CCS: b) Argue your views over controversy

Many respondents (70%) claim to be able to argue their points of view about a controversial political or social issue at a high or higher level.

Q9. CCS: c) Stand as a candidate

With about one tenth of students claiming to be incapable of standing as a candidate in a (school) election, 8% students think they are very capable.

Q9. CCS: d) Organize students

Regarding the capability of organizing a group of students in order to achieve changes at school/university, about a third of the students have achieved a high level.

Q9. CCS: e) Comment on social media

At least 40% students are skillful at commenting on a controversial issue on social media. This indicator intends to correspond with the trend of online civic participation and popularity of social media in the civil society. However, around a third of the respondents have a (very) low level of skills as such.

Q9. CCS: f) Write to the media

When expressing one's views on a current issue, 50% respondents say that they are capable of writing an opinion letter to a newspaper at a fine level (from well to very well).

Q9. CCS: g) Speak in class on political/social issues

Regarding the vocal skill of speaking in front of the class about a social or political issue, over half of the respondents are confident to master this skill at a fine level (from well to very well).

2.3. Civic competence – Values (CCV)

The majority of respondents have high or very high level of being ‘critical’ in making judgments in civic issues, such as gender equality, immigrant-native conflicts over culture and work, and individual-government conflicts over autonomy.

This means that many students prefer human rights of the individuals, such as freedom of speech, privacy and equality in work, compared to the supremacy of the government in the name of “common good”, even in the scenario of security threat to the country. Detailed scores of CCV overall are calculated from the following items and presented in the matrixes of the following.

Table 9: Levels of CCV by item (frequencies in %)

Item	Very low	Low	Moderate	High	Very high	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
CCV overall	0	6.1	6.1	40.8	46.9	49	4.02	.61
Free expression	6.0	2.0	8.0	24.0	60.0	50	4.30	1.11
Free criticism	8.0	2.0	6.0	36.0	48.0	50	4.14	1.16
Security agencies check anyone	36.0	50.0	0	0	12.0	49	3.76	.66
Government controls media	38.0	42.0	18.0	0	0	49	4.20	.74
Gender equality	6.0	2.0	2.0	14.0	74.0	49	4.51	1.08
Immigrants keep custom	2.0	12.0	42.0	36.0	6.0	49	3.33	.85
Immigrants restricted jobs	22.0	42.0	32.0	0	0	48	3.90	.75

Q10. CCV: a) Free expression

The majority of respondents (84%) agree or strongly agree that everyone should always have the right to express their opinions freely.

Q10. CCV: b) Free criticism

The majority of respondents (84%) agree or strongly agree that people should always be free to criticize the government publicly.

Q10. CCV: c) Security agencies check anyone

One third of students are neutral on the statement of “Security agencies should be allowed to check phone calls and emails of anyone suspected of threatening national security”. Half the students are against the statement and 12% students are strongly against it.

Q10. CCV: d) Government controls media

Many respondents (80%) are against that when faced with violent threats to national security, the government should have the power to control what appears in the media.

Q10. CCV: e) Gender equality

Most respondents (88%) agree or strongly agree that men and women should have the same rights in every way.

Q10. CCV: f) Immigrants keep custom

More than 40% respondents keep neutral at the opinion that immigrants should have the opportunity to continue their own customs and lifestyle. However, more remaining respondents are welcoming to the situation than those who are against or strongly against to it.

Q10. CCV: g) Immigrants restricted jobs

This question also deals with the immigrants-natives relationship and asks whether immigration shall be restricted, when there are not many jobs available. With just above half of the respondents disagreeing or strongly disagreeing upon the statement that “immigration should be restricted”, nearly a third of the respondents remain neutral.

2.4. Civic competence – Attitude (CCA)

Table 10: Levels of CCA by item (N=50, frequencies in %)

Item	Very low	Low	Moderate	High	Very high	Mean	Std. Deviation
CCA1	0	8.0	38.0	34.0	20.0	3.51	.72
CCA2	2.0	18.0	34.0	34.0	12.0	3.32	.74
CCA3	26.0	44.0	28.0	2.0	0	2.29	.6513
CCA	4.0	18.0	62.0	14.0	2.0	3.04	.60

2.4.1. Civic competence – Attitude 1 (CCA1): Interest in politics of different levels

A third of students are interested at politics in general and a fifth of students are very interested at politics. Detailed scores of CCA1 are calculated from the following items and presented in the matrixes of Table 11.

Table 11: Levels of CCA1 by item (N=50, frequencies in %)

Item	Very low	Low	Moderate	High	Very high	Mean	Std. Deviation
CCA1	0	8.0	38.0	34.0	20.0	3.51	.72
Community politics	4.0	14.0	32.0	42.0	8.0	3.36	.96
National politics	0	8.0	6.0	64.0	22.0	4.00	.78
Non-EU politics	0	28.0	26.0	32.0	14.0	3.32	1.04
EU politics	2.0	18.0	34.0	34.0	12.0	3.36	.99

Q11. CCA1: a) Community politics

Half of the respondents show their interest in political issues in their communities.

Q11. CCA1: b) National politics

Over 60% students are interested at political issues in their home countries. Another one fifth of respondents say they are very interested.

Q11. CCA1: c) Non-EU politics

More than 40% of the students are interested or enthusiastic at politics in non-countries or international communities that exclude their home countries. The variation of students’ attitude at this topic is the biggest among the four topics.

Q11. CCA1: d) EU politics

More than 40% of the respondents are interested or very interested at politics on the EU level. Only 2% students are very disinterested.

2.4.2. Civic competence – Attitude 2 (CCA2): Forms of participation

In the overview of forms including community voluntary work to formal membership in a social organization, the data indicate that 46% students have a highly positive attitude to all forms of civic participation, and 2 percent of them have strong resistance to almost all forms of civic engagement. Detailed scores of CCA2 are calculated from the following items and presented in the matrixes of tables in the following.

Table 12: Levels of CCA2 by item (N=50, frequencies in %)

Item	Very low	Low	Moderate	High	Very high	Mean	Std. Deviation
CCA2	2.0	18.0	34.0	34.0	12.0	3.32	.74
Local elections	6.0	2.0	12.0	40.0	40.0	4.06	1.07
National elections	2.0	4.0	0	24.0	70.0	4.56	.86
EU elections	4.0	8.0	12.0	32.0	44.0	4.04	1.12
Help a candidate	14.0	30.0	32.0	18.0	6.0	2.72	1.11
Be a candidate	40.0	30.0	20.0	8.0	2.0	2.02	1.06
Join an organization	10.0	20.0	24.0	28.0	18.0	3.24	1.26
Talk with fellows	2.0	10.0	28.0	36.0	24.0	3.70	1.02
Write to newspaper	20.0	30.0	22.0	18.0	10.0	2.68	1.27
Online forum	32.0	20.0	22.0	16.0	10.0	2.52	1.36
Be a volunteer	2.0	12.0	28.0	32.0	26.0	3.68	1.06

Q12. CCA2: a) Local elections

Regarding forms of civic participation, political election on the local level is quite popular with the respondents, because when they are eligible, 40% respondents are willing to join local elections, and another 40 percent are very willing to take part.

Q12. CCA2: b) National elections

National elections are quite welcomed by the respondents. Seventy percent of them are very enthusiastic at national elections and over one fifth are willing to take part when eligible.

Q12. CCA2: c) EU elections

Nearly one third of respondents are willing to take part in elections on the EU level when eligible, and 44% show strong willingness at this form of civic participation.

Q12. CCA2: d) Help a candidate

Nearly a third of respondents remain neutral at helping a candidate during a political campaign.

Q12. CCA2: e) Be a candidate

Many respondents are reluctant at standing as a candidate in local elections. Forty percent of them are very resistant and thirty percent are unwilling to take that as a form of civic participation.

Q12. CCA2: f) Join an organization

Regarding joining an organization mainly for a social concern, such as being a regular member of a charity organization, 10% respondents are very resistant, and 46% respondents are willing or very enthusiastic.

Q12. CCA2: g) Talk with fellows

Sixty percent of respondents are willing or very enthusiastic at talking with fellow students about their opinions on social or political events.

Q12. CCA2: h) Write to newspaper

Half of the responding students are unwilling or very resistant at writing their views on political or social issues to newspapers.

Q12. CCA2: i) Online forum

More than half of the respondents show unwillingness or strong resistance to joining political or social discussion on an online forum. Yet 10% of all respondents show strong intention of doing that.

Q12. CCA2: j) Be a volunteer

Above half of the students are willing or very enthusiastic at helping people in the community as a volunteer. Only 2% of the students are very resistant.

2.4.3. Civic competence – Attitude 3 (CCA3): Protests

Generally speaking, 70% respondents are reluctant or very reluctant at taking part of protesting for their disagreements on social or political issues. There are only 2% respondents who are proactive at demonstrating their disagreements in the public. Detailed scores of CCA3 are calculated from the following items and presented in the matrixes of the following.

Table 13: CCA3 by item (N=50, frequencies in %)

Item	Very low	Low	Moderate	High	Very high	Mean	Std. Deviation
CCA3	26.0	44.0	28.0	2.0	0	2.29	.65
Protest on social media	24.0	36.0	14.0	16.0	10.0	2.52	1.30
Argue on a newspaper	24.0	30.0	14.0	22.0	10.0	2.64	1.34
Badge/T-shirt	32.0	38.0	10.0	12.0	8.0	2.26	1.26
Contact a representative	24.0	28.0	18.0	20.0	10.0	2.64	1.13
Peaceful march/rally	18.0	18.0	22.0	28.0	14.0	3.02	1.33
Collect signatures	20.0	24.0	34.0	18.0	4.0	2.62	1.12
Not to buy something	10.0	6.0	32.0	18.0	34.0	3.60	1.29
Spray-painting	86.0	8.0	6.0	0	0	1.20	.54
Block traffic	88.0	12.0	0	0	0	1.12	.33
Occupy public buildings	78.0	16.0	6.0	0	0	1.28	.57

Q13. CCA3: a) Protest on social media

In terms of expressing disagreements on some social or political situation, 60% students say that they will not or will certainly not post their disagreements on social media.

Q13. CCA3: b) Argue on a newspaper

In terms of expressing disagreements on some social or political situation, more than half of the students say that they will not or will certainly not post their argument on the traditional media, the newspapers.

Q13. CCA3: c) Badge/T-shirt

In terms of expressing disagreements on some social or political situation, 70% students say that they will not or will certainly not demonstrate their opinions by wearing a badge or a T-shirt.

Q13. CCA3: d) Contact a representative

In terms of expressing disagreements on some social or political situation, just above 50% students say that they will not or will certainly not contact an elected representative.

Q13. CCA3: e) Peaceful march/rally

In terms of expressing disagreements on some social or political situation, 22% students do not have strong opinion on whether or not they shall take part in a peaceful march or rally, and 28% students say that they are possible to take this form of demonstration yet not very decisively intended to do so.

Q13. CCA3: f) Collect signatures

In terms of expressing disagreements on some social or political situation, 34% students do not have strong opinion on whether or not they shall take part in collecting signatures for a petition.

Q13. CCA3: g) Not to buy something

In terms of expressing disagreements on some social or political situation, 34% students have strong intension in boycotting certain products, while nearly a third of students do not have strong opinion on whether or not they shall take that for political demonstration.

Q13. CCA3: h) Spray-painting

In terms of expressing disagreements on some social or political situation, most students do not consider the way of spray-painting protest slogans on walls, although 6% of them say that they might do that under certain circumstances.

Q13. CCA3: i) Block traffic

In terms of expressing disagreements on some social or political situation, no respondent indicate interest or intension at blocking traffic for demonstration.

Q13. CCA3: j) Occupy public buildings

In terms of expressing disagreements on some social or political situation, most students do not consider the way of occupying public buildings, although 6% of them say that they might do that under certain circumstances.

Appendix C. Descriptive results of independent variables

1. Previous civic education

Q19. Forms of civic education in one's previous school education.

Most respondents have received such education during lower secondary school and usually the subject(s) were/was taught by teachers of subjects related to human and social sciences. Details are presented in the table below.

Table 14: Forms of previous civic education (N=50, frequencies in %)

Forms	Yes	No
Taught as a separate course	46.0	54.0
Taught by teachers of subjects related to human and social sciences	80.0	20.0
Integrated into all subjects	24.0	76.0
As an extra-curricular activity	8.0	92.0
Embedded in the school experience as a whole	62	38

Q19. Forms of previous civic education: a) separate subjects

More than half the students recall that during previous school education equivalent to lower secondary school, civic education was taught as a separate subject by teachers of civic related subjects.

Q19. Forms of previous civic education: b) related subjects

Eighty percent of the students recall that during previous school education equivalent to lower secondary school, civic education was taught by teachers of subjects related to human and social sciences (e.g. history, geography, law, economics, etc.).

Q19. Forms of previous civic education: c) integrated to all subjects

Only one fifth of the students recall that during previous school education equivalent to lower secondary school, civic education was integrated into all subjects taught at school.

Q19. Forms of previous civic education: d) extra-curricular

Most students report that during previous school education equivalent to lower secondary school, civic education was an extra-curricular activity.

Q19. Forms of previous civic education: e) embedded in the whole school experience

One third of the respondents agree that during previous school education equivalent to lower secondary school, course(s) related to civic education is/are embedded in the school experience as a whole.

Q20. Seriousness of previous civic education

Forty-six percent respondents think that the civic education during lower secondary education was perceived at a moderate level of seriousness. More than a third of the respondents claim that civic education was preceded carelessly or very carelessly (table below).

Table 15: Seriousness of previous civic education (frequencies in %)

Item	Very carelessly	Carelessly	Neutral	Seriously	Very seriously	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Seriousness of previous civic education	10.0	26.0	46.0	18.0	0	50	2.72	.89

2. Civic experience

Overall, civic experience out of school education is not common among the respondents. Except 2% of them that have much experience in civic activities, 78% students have very little experience, including voluntary work in the communities, study associations and etc. either during or before the university (Table below).

Table 16: Civic experience by item (frequencies in %)

Item	Very limited	Somewhat limited	Moderate	Much	Very much	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Civic experience overall	44.0	34.0	20.0	0	2.0	50	1.82	.90

Table 17: Forms of civic experience (N= 50, frequencies in %)

Forms	Yes, only in university	Yes, only before university	Yes, both before and in university	No, never
An organization affiliated by political parties or organizations	2.0	4.0	10.0	84.0
A voluntary group for communities	10.0	24.0	46.0	20.0
An organization based on ethnicity (e.g. the same national, racial, or cultural origins)	10.0	4.0	0.0	86.0
A group of young people campaigning for an issue	44.0	6.0	6.0	44.0
A study association	2.0	2.0	4.0	92.0
An association for leisure hobbies or culture events	40.0	6.0	20.0	34.0

Q21. Civic experience: a) organizations with political support

Most students (84%) have never joined an organization affiliated by political parties or organizations.

Q21. Civic experience: b) voluntary group for communities

Forty-six percent of the respondents have joined voluntary groups that do something to help the community both before and in university.

Q21. Civic experience: c) ethnic group

Most students (86%) have never entered an organization based on ethnicity (e.g. the same national, racial, or cultural origins).

Q21. Civic experience: d) campaign

Most students do not have the experience of joining a group of young people campaigning for an issue.

Q21. Civic experience: e) study association

Half of the respondents have the experience of taking part in a study association. Many of them have that experience only during university. Forty-four percent of students have never joined a study association.

Q21. Civic experience: f) hobby association

Many students have or had membership in an association for leisure hobbies or culture events. Among those experienced students, the most students had the experience only in university, and a few of them only before university.

3. Family and the immediate community

Q17. Family openness/flexibility

Generally speaking, most students’ families (74%) are willing or very welcoming to discussions about political or social issues at home (Table 5).

Table 18: Family openness/flexibility to political or social discussion (N=50)

Item	Very unwilling	Somewhat unwilling	Moderate	Willing	Very encouraging	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Family openness/flexibility	0	10.0	16.0	34.0	40.0	50	4.04	.99

Q18. Community Heterogeneity: during and before university

In general, 60% students hold neutral opinions on the heterogeneity of the communities. There are above one fifth respondents who sense strong heterogeneity in the communities (Table 1.7 and Table 1.8). Particularly, the communities during their university study appear to be more heterogeneous than the communities before the university. In the communities before the university, jobs and occupations are the main source of heterogeneity, while in the communities during students’ university study, nationalities, languages and habits of living are the main source of heterogeneity (tables below).

Table 19: Community Heterogeneity by time (N=50, frequencies in %)

Item	Not diverse	Somewhat	Neutral	Somewhat	Very diverse	Mean	Std.
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	/ homogeneous	homogeneous	l	diverse / heteronomous	/ heteronomous	n	Deviation
Before university	24.0	40.0	18.0	10.0	8.0	2.53	.92
During university	2.0	10.0	44.0	30.0	14.0	3.42	.73
Heterogeneity overall	2.0	16.0	60.0	14.0	8.0	3.03	.64

Q18. Community Heterogeneity1: before university

When recalling life before university, 64% students do not sense big heterogeneity in their communities, especially regarding nationalities and languages in the communities (Table 1.7 and Table 1.8).

Q18. Community Heterogeneity before university: a) nationality

Speaking about the heterogeneity in the communities before university, in terms of the nationalities of the residents, the majority of the respondents do not sense obvious diversity and only 4% report to have huge diversity in the communities before university.

Q18. Community Heterogeneity before university: b) language

In the communities before university, 74% students think that the languages that residents in the communities before university is homogeneous.

Q18. Community Heterogeneity before university: c) religion

Regarding the religious heterogeneity, 60% students sense a little or lesser diversity and one fifth of the students are neutral at the issue.

Q18. Community Heterogeneity before university: d) jobs

From the perspective of jobs or occupation, 46% students think their communities before university are heterogeneous.

Table 20: Heterogeneity before university by items (N=50, frequencies in %)

Item	Very low	Low	Neutral	High	Very high	Mean	Std. Deviation
Nationality	30.0	36.0	16.0	14.0	4.0	2.26	1.16
Language	42.0	32.0	10.0	8.0	8.0	2.08	1.26
Religion	26.0	34.0	22.0	8.0	10.0	2.42	1.25
Jobs	2.0	20.0	32.0	32.0	14.0	3.36	1.03
Overall	24.0	40.0	18.0	10.0	8.0	2.53	.916

Q18. Community Heterogeneity2: during university

Over 40% students feel obvious heterogeneity or homogeneity in general, especially regarding nationalities, languages and habits of living (see Table 8). The followings are details of the items that compose the variable Community Heterogeneity1.

Q18. Community Heterogeneity during university: a) nationality

For the community heterogeneity during university education, 60% of the students think there is diversity or much diversity with regard to nationality.

Q18. Community Heterogeneity during university: b) language

For the community heterogeneity during their university study, 60% students think there is diversity or much diversity with regard to language.

Q18. Community Heterogeneity during university: c) religion

In terms of religion, 40% students do not have a clear opinion on the diversity and 34% students think there is obvious heterogeneity.

Q18. Community Heterogeneity during university: d) living habits

For the community heterogeneity during university education, in terms of living habits, 40% students do not sense obvious heterogeneity or homogeneity, but 46% students feel the heterogeneity at a high level.

Q18. Community Heterogeneity during university: e) reasoning

There are 34% students who feel strong heterogeneity in the habit of reasoning.

Table 21: Heterogeneity during university by items (N=50, frequencies in %)

Item	Very low	Low	Neutral	High	Very high	Mean	Std. Deviation
Nationality	0.0	12.0	28.0	32.0	28.0	3.76	1.00
Language	2.0	10.0	32.0	40.0	16.0	3.58	.95
Religion	6.0	20.0	40.0	18.0	16.0	3.18	1.12
Living habits	2.0	12.0	40.0	32.0	14.0	3.44	.95
Reasoning	2.0	20.0	44.0	28.0	6.0	3.16	.89
Overall	2.0	10.0	44.0	30.0	14.0	3.42	.73

4. Personal SES

Q14. FSES: difference in political opinions

Regarding the difference of one’s political opinions from others, one fifth of the respondents do not have an idea. No respondents think their political opinions are extremely different in the group or very much the same as others (table below).

Table 22: Difference in political opinions (frequencies in %)

Item	No difference	Little difference	Neutral	Somehow different	Very different	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Overall	37.5	40.0	22.5	22.5	0	40	2.85	.77

Q15. FSES: experience of being discriminated

Based on students’ experience of being discriminated either before and during the university, we generate an index to reflect students’ general experience of being discriminated or marginalized in a group. Half of the students report to have never been discriminated and nobody reports to live in a

circle where discrimination is very common. However, there are 22% students that often or from time to time suffer from discrimination.

Table 23: Frequencies of being discriminated (N=50, frequencies in %)

	Never	Seldom	Neutral	Occasionally	Often	Mean	Std. Deviation
Overall	64.0	26.0	0.0	6.0	4.0	1.62	.79
Before university	58.0	28.0	0.0	8.0	6.0	1.62	.88
During university	60.0	24.0	0.0	10.0	6.0	1.62	.90

Q16. FSES: reasons of discrimination

Some respondents claimed to have been discriminated and provided their thoughts on the reasons of discrimination. According to their responses, most cases of discrimination are related to gender and race. Here is a full list:

- being a lonely child-teachers did not treat students equally
- A technical woman.
- Assumptions I am not Australian.
- At the university I think the main problem was that the internationalization of the study programme is not fully completed or thought through. That is because the programme is supposed to be English-taught with no other language requirements, but for our project it was still an obstacle if you were not able to speak Dutch. This led to a minor discrimination in my opinion.
- Being a women; negative and positive discrimination
- Being an international student and non-EU citizen.
- belonging to a minority group
- Differences men-women
- Educational level (too high) and age
- Female, appearance
- Gender and appearance
- I'm Asian.
- My country (Greece)'s economic situation
- Nationality
- Probably to make a joke.
- Race, religion
- Race, religion, gender, nationality