

Chapter 14

Does Dual Citizenship Endanger Ethnic Cohabitation? How the South Tyrolean Population Views a Supplementary Austrian Citizenship

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Abstract

A relatively new trend in research and public debates about dual citizenship is the collective granting of citizenship to nationally and ethnically related minority populations residing in neighbouring countries, as practised by Hungary or Italy (see the contributions in this volume by [Pogonyi](#) and by [Pallaver and Denicolò](#) – [Chapters 7](#) and [9](#) respectively). A former Austrian federal government (2017–2019) proposed to offer Austrian citizenship to German- and Ladin-speaking South Tyroleans in addition to their Italian citizenship. The main argument for this proposal was to strengthen the historical and cultural relationship between the ethnic minorities of South Tyrol and their “fatherland” or “protecting nation”, Austria. The topic of this study was the attitude of South Tyroleans towards this proposal. This attitude had not been investigated before, although several politicians and commentators had argued that South Tyroleans are very interested in it. This specific question was put into a larger theoretical and political context in two ways: on the one hand, the importance attached to citizenship by regional populations and, on the other, the political units with which the South Tyroleans identify today, especially their relationship with Austria. To this end, the social research institute *apollis* in Bolzano-Bozen interviewed a representative sample of South Tyroleans in spring 2019. The results show, surprisingly, that only a minority of them appreciate this Austrian proposal. One of the main reasons is the fear that dual citizenship would somewhat impair the coexistence of the language groups in South Tyrol. As far as ethnic-national identity is concerned, most of the respondents feel the closest to the region in which they live (South Tyrol) but very few identify with Austria, even among the German-speaking South Tyroleans. The most unexpected finding of the study is that the differences in perceptions and attitudes regarding the proposal are very slight between German- and Italian-speaking South Tyroleans. The validity of these findings is supported by the fact that similar results were obtained in surveys conducted among Hungarians living in Slovakia and among Romanians in Serbia and Ukraine.

1. The problem of the collective conferral of dual citizenship

Dual citizenship is an issue mainly relevant for individuals, usually migrants who reside in a new country without holding the citizenship of that country. However, it is also an issue touching upon collective groups. In recent times, for instance, Hungary has opened up the possibility for ethnic Hungarians living in Romania, Slovakia, the Serbian province of Vojvodina and Western Ukraine to be granted Hungarian citizenship (see [Chapter 7](#) in this volume, by Szabolcs Pogonyi); Italy did the same for Slovenians and Croatians with Italian origins. The other comparable examples are mostly found in Central Eastern Europe – Poland, Romania, etc. (see Dumbrava 2014; Pogonyi 2017).

In 2017 the newly formed Austrian government included in its programme the proposal to grant Austrian citizenship to German- and Ladin-speaking South Tyroleans, in addition to their Italian citizenship, a proposal which was discussed widely in Austria, South Tyrol and Italy. The authors of this study decided, together with Günther Pallaver (University of Innsbruck) and Francesco Palermo (University of Verona and Eurac, Bolzano-Bozen), to carry out a survey among South Tyroleans from all three official language groups¹ to investigate their attitudes toward this proposal. In this chapter, we present the findings from this survey.

1.1 Emergence of the problem in South Tyrol

The idea to grant Austrian citizenship to German- and Ladin-speaking persons in South Tyrol in addition to their Italian citizenship appeared for the first time in 2006. Thirteen years later this proposition found its way into the programme of the Austrian federal government. To understand this apparently untimely initiative, one must look back into its historical origins.

The year 2019 marks the hundredth anniversary of the annexation of the southern part of the former crown land of Tyrol of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy to Italy, as sealed in the Peace Treaty of St Germain. As a result, several hundred thousand people of German and Ladin mother tongue became Italian citizens at once. Most of the descendants of these ethnic groups now live in the Autonomous Province of Bolzano, South Tyrol, where they enjoy strong protection as linguistic minorities. The solution of the so-called South Tyrolean question by the Second Statute of Autonomy, which came into force in 1972, is today considered exemplary for the settlement of ethnic conflicts in multi-lingual areas (Haller 2006; Steininger 2003). In fact, Italian-, German- and Ladin-speaking citizens of South Tyrol have been living peacefully together since then, even though the

¹ These three language groups are called “official” because their protection (schools in their language, equal representation in public service, police housing etc.) is guaranteed by the special autonomy statute for the Province of Bolzano, South Tyrol. This legal status does not pertain to speakers of other languages who immigrated to South Tyrol in recent times and now also constitute about 10 per cent of the population.

language communities form quite clearly separated ethnic-linguistic sub-societies (Atz, Haller and Pallaver 2016). On the other hand, significant political forces, especially representatives of the South Tyrolean People's Party (*Südtiroler Volkspartei* or SVP), repeatedly emphasise that the German and Ladin language group is an "Austrian minority" whose "fatherland" is the present Republic of Austria. The proposal put forward in 2006 by two SVP parliamentarians in Rome (Siegfried Brugger and Karl Zeller) to grant German- and Ladin-speaking South Tyroleans Austrian citizenship in addition to Italian citizenship, if they so wish (Denicolò and Pallaver 2018), should be seen in this light.

The proposal fell on fertile ground both within and outside the SVP. It was adopted by the South Tyrolean Freedom Party (*Süd-Tiroler Freiheit*), whose mission is the separation of South Tyrol from Italy and its reintegration into Austria (Pallaver 2018). As a result, in March 2012 the South Tyrolean provincial parliament adopted a motion in favour of dual citizenship for ethnic minorities with the votes of the SVP and German opposition parties. A few weeks later, the SVP provincial assembly also adopted a resolution with the following wording: "As an expression of its close ties with the fatherland Austria in the European spirit, the South Tyrolean People's Party strives for dual citizenship for South Tyroleans" (SVP Club 2018, 4).

The Austrian federal government formed at the end of 2017 – consisting of an ÖVP–FPÖ coalition which was in office until May 2019 – promised to grant Austrian citizenship to German- and Ladin-speaking South Tyroleans in its programme.² Then in October 2019, the Austrian parliament in Vienna confirmed this intention. At the beginning of 2019, when this study was conceived, the prospect of dual citizenship for South Tyroleans belonging to the German or Ladin language group was thus quite concrete. Proponents as well as sceptics repeatedly made public statements on this issue. On the part of the supporters, arguments were put forward on very different levels, ranging from the idealistic goal of a stronger emotional connection to "Fatherland Austria", to the assertion that this would provide even better protection for the ethnic minorities and to personal benefits – for example, that Austrian citizenship would enable people to turn to the Austrian embassy abroad for support and use their mother tongue to explain their problems and needs. Critics argued above all that limiting access to Austrian citizenship to members of the German and Ladin language groups implied an exclusion of the Italian-speaking population, which would endanger inter-ethnic relations and social integration. Moreover, it would be superfluous – as both Italians and Austrian nationals are European Union citizens – and would contradict the European spirit.

Various legal experts also contributed to the debate. They stated that there are no clear agreements in international law on how so-called kin states can fulfil their role as a protecting power of linguistic, ethnic or religious minorities abroad who are close to

² https://www.wienerzeitung.at/_em_daten/_wzo/2017/12/16/171216_1614_regierungsprogramm.pdf; accessed 6 June 2019).

their own population. Rather, there is a more-or-less tolerated practice that ranges from a certain degree of recognition and financial support to the granting of citizenship (see Palermo 2020). For example, international law expert Peter Hilpold (2016) explained that such dual citizenship is possible under international law and compatible with the Austrian constitution. Walter Obwexer, expert in European and international law, argued that dual citizenship – despite being legally possible (Obwexer 2011) – could not only severely affect the intergovernmental relationship between Austria and Italy but could also weaken Austria’s protective function, anchored at the international level.³ Former member of parliament Oskar Peterlini finally pleaded for extending the right to Austrian citizenship to all descendants of citizens of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy in order to defuse the danger of ethnic tensions within South Tyrol (Peterlini 2019).

In any case, what the population itself thinks of the proposal and how it assesses the advantages and disadvantages expressed was the subject of pure speculation. Filling this gap by a representative population survey was thus the main intent of our survey, the results of which are presented here.

1.2 Attitudes suggested by previous research

As explained above, the focus of this chapter lies in the attitudes of South Tyroleans of all three language groups regarding the importance of citizenship in general and the additional granting of Austrian citizenship in particular. The empirical results reported here originate from a specific survey conducted for this purpose.⁴

Some indirect empirical evidence of these attitudes already exists in earlier studies. For example, a series of surveys asked which political community or territory the South Tyroleans primarily identify with. The findings were quite clear. According to the surveys conducted by the South Tyrolean Statistical Institute ASTAT under the label “South Tyrolean Language Barometer” in 2004 and 2014, between 80 and 85 per cent of the German-speaking population feel that they are “South Tyroleans”, 3 to 9 per cent that they are Tyroleans, just under 10 per cent that they are Italians and a maximum of 2 per cent that they are Austrians (ASTAT 2006, 2015).⁵ Similar findings were revealed by surveys

³ Tageszeitung Dolomiten 12.11.2019.

⁴ The study is embedded in a larger project dealing with dual citizenship from various perspectives, which was conceived by Max Haller and Rainer Bauböck, together with other scholars (see the introduction by Bauböck and Haller in this volume).

⁵ In the two ASTAT surveys, the wording of the question is similar to that used in the *apollis* questionnaire but, in 2004, it provided for a reduced number of categories and only in 2014 were the categories “Austrian” and “I am not interested in the question of identity” added; in addition, multiple answers were possible. In the ASTAT 2014 survey, therefore, the question and possible answers were identical to those used by *apollis*. The difference is that, in the ASTAT survey, more than one answer was possible but these were not explicitly requested, whereas in the *apollis* questionnaire there were two separate questions (Atz and Forlin 2020, 200).

conducted by the Institute of Social Research and Opinion Polling – *apollis* – in 2010 and the Austrian Opinion Research Institute Karmasin in 2013 (Denicolò and Pallaver 2018, 274). With regard to an eventual dual citizenship option for South Tyroleans, massive differences between German- and Ladin-speaking South Tyroleans versus Italian-speaking South Tyroleans are to be expected, since the offer of the Austrian federal government regarding the collective granting of citizenship was only directed at the first two groups. On the basis of the survey results mentioned above, however, even among these groups an unreserved support for the proposal cannot be expected, especially in view of its potentially divisive effect.

Regarding the attitudes of the South Tyrolean population towards the proposal to grant additional Austrian citizenship, we formulate the following five research questions; we also tentatively present some hypotheses.

1. What importance do South Tyroleans attach to citizenship for a person's life chances? Here we expect a comparatively high significance.
2. What do South Tyroleans mainly identify with – their country, South Tyrol (the province of Bolzano), the nation states of Italy or Austria or the European Union/Europe? It can be assumed that our study confirms the well-known finding that South Tyroleans identify primarily with their province and less with the Italian and Austrian states.
3. What do the people of South Tyrol know about the Austrian government's offer to grant Austrian citizenship to members of the German and Ladin language groups? How do they evaluate this offer? Since there has always been a lively, often emotionally charged public discussion on this topic, a relatively good level of knowledge can be expected.
4. Would the interviewees themselves apply for Austrian citizenship? What advantages would they see in this? What effects do they expect from such a policy? Due to the predominant national-territorial identification of South Tyroleans with their province, quite small percentages – only a minority – are to be expected here.
5. In all these questions, a differentiation must be made between the language groups due to the history of South Tyrol and the different ethnic and cultural affiliations. Can we expect strong differences between German- and Ladin-speaking persons on the one hand and Italian-speaking persons on the other?

1.3 The survey

The target of the survey are Italian citizens of all three language groups residing in South Tyrol aged 18 and over. A total of 700 persons were interviewed between 22 March and 08 April 2019 with a standardised questionnaire using CATI technology.⁶ The interviews

⁶ The research design and the questionnaire underlying this study were elaborated by Max Haller, Hermann Atz, Francesco Palermo and Günther Pallaver. Except for some general questions about

were conducted in German or Italian, depending on the target person's main language. The sample was weighted according to demographic characteristics and is representative of the domestic population of South Tyrol, including the three official ethnic-linguistic groups (Südtiroler Landesregierung 2019). The sample includes 446 members of the German language group, 217 members of the Italian group and 33 of the Ladin language group (four respondents declared that they belonged to another language group). Due to the limited sample size, however, the problem arose that the total number of interviewed persons belonging to the Ladin language group was too small to make reliable statements. For some aspects of the analysis we nevertheless refer the results (to be interpreted with caution), for others we aggregate the Ladin and the German language groups because of their similar cultural traditions and their sharing of the condition of being an ethnic minority in Italy.

2. Empirical results

In this section the empirical results are presented. We begin with the opinions of South Tyroleans regarding the importance of citizenship and then present the findings on the identification of South Tyroleans with their province, with Italy and with Austria. In the third section, attitudes towards dual citizenship are recorded and the important question is examined as to whether there are significant differences in this respect between German- and Italian-speaking South Tyroleans. The last section deals in general with the question of which social groups attach great importance to citizenship *per se*.

2.1 The importance of citizenship in general

The possession of citizenship today must be seen as a decisive prerequisite not only for the political but also for the social and economic integration of a person into a territorially bounded society (see [Chapter 2](#) by Max Haller in this volume). Most of the people growing up within one state and never emigrating to another are probably hardly aware of this. In South Tyrol this may well be different, because – as stated above – this country has only belonged to Italy for about a hundred years. Many South Tyroleans had negative experiences with (forced) emigration and the loss of citizenship in their own or their family histories. These included emigration to the German Reich on the basis of the option agreement between the two dictatorships in Rome and Berlin in 1939;⁷ the re-acquisi-

the importance of citizenship, which were used in all parts of the whole research project, all questions had to be developed specifically for this survey on the basis of a detailed knowledge of the policy proposal at that stage and the corresponding public debate at local level.

⁷ The option agreement forced German-speaking South Tyroleans to choose between full linguistic and cultural assimilation in fascist Italy or resettling in Eastern European territories conquered by the Nazi army.

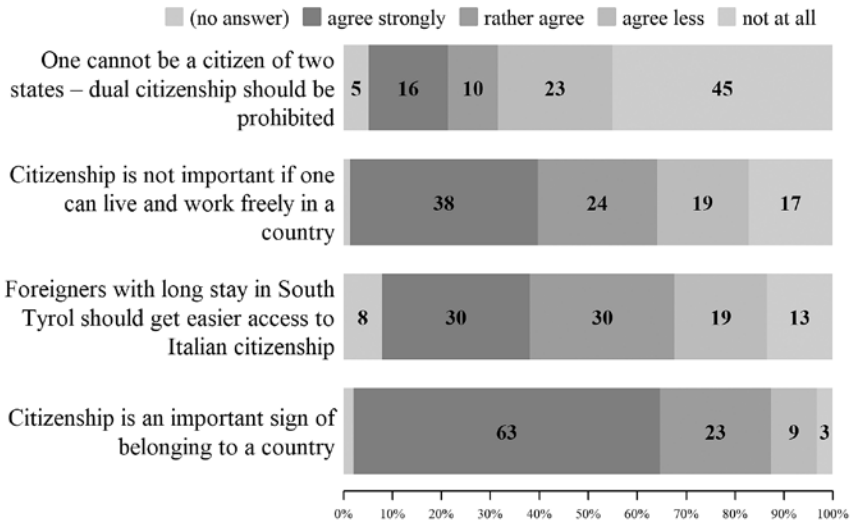
tion of Italian citizenship on the basis of the 1946 agreement between the Austrian and Italian foreign ministers, Karl Gruber and Alcide De Gasperi; and the massive emigration of the rural population from South Tyrol in the 1950s and 1960s while retaining Italian citizenship (Steininger 2003). The question of a possible return to the Austrian state was also on the political agenda for a long time and is still demanded by some secessionist parties. The first issue that arises, therefore, is the importance which the population of South Tyrol attaches to citizenship in general. Of course, the differences between the language groups are of particular interest.

The answers to this first question show a high level of awareness of this issue: almost two-thirds of respondents (61 per cent) consider citizenship to be very important in a person's life, a quarter (23 per cent) consider it to be quite important and only one person in six thinks that citizenship is unimportant. Interestingly, opinions on this are clearly dependent on the level of education but not in a way one might have expected: 67 per cent of people with primary school education consider citizenship very important whereas, among those with a university degree, this is true for only 49 per cent; the other educational groups are in between.⁸ There is also a clear correlation between age and support for the statement and a weaker one with gender: women agree more often than men and older people more often than younger ones. The fact that more highly educated people consider citizenship less important may well be related to the fact that their qualifications generally make it easier for them to find a job in another country than for less-educated people. The differences between the three language groups are slight: 81 per cent of German-speaking and even 92 per cent of Italian-speaking South Tyroleans consider citizenship to be important in a person's life, with Ladin-speaking South Tyroleans lying exactly in between. This is quite surprising and contradicts our expectations.

The respondents were asked to what extent they endorse four statements which dealt with this issue in general and with dual citizenship. The results are shown in Figure 14.1, where several interesting findings emerge. First, there is an apparent inconsistency: 62 per cent of respondents agree with Statement 2 ("Citizenship is not important"); however, the second part of the statement is: "The main thing is that you can work and live in a country without obstacles". This makes the high level of agreement plausible: citizenship is seen as very important precisely when social and economic rights are associated with it. One could therefore already conclude here that national citizenship is losing importance within the European Union because this latter, with its four fundamental freedoms, grants largely equal rights to all citizens of the Union in all member states.

⁸ A similar result emerged in an online survey among Austrians living abroad, where 66 per cent with only primary school education attributed high importance to citizenship compared to 54 per cent of those with a college degree. See [Chapter 13](#) by Florian Gundl in this volume.

Figure 14.1. Attitudes towards different aspects of citizenship



However, the further findings on this issue confirm the answers to the first question. For example, almost two-thirds of the respondents strongly agree that citizenship is an important sign of belonging to a country and a total of 86 per cent consider it (very or quite) important. There are also very tolerant and liberal attitudes towards the granting of citizenship: only 26 per cent agree with the statement that dual citizenship should be prohibited (68 per cent reject it) and a clear majority (60 per cent) thinks that foreigners who have been living in South Tyrol for a longer period of time should have easier access to Italian citizenship.

If we look at these attitudes according to social characteristics, one finding is clear: the rejection of dual citizenship decreases the higher the level of education – from about one third of those who only have compulsory schooling to 15 per cent of those with academic qualifications. This is probably mainly the case because these groups are actually or supposedly more often affected by competition from immigrants in the labour and housing markets. Older people may also see immigration as a threat to their familiar social environment. The age effect emerges clearly: only 14 per cent of respondents under the age of 35 are in favour of a ban on dual citizenship, compared with 37 per cent of those over 65. There is little difference by educational group, however, when it comes to the statement that immigrants should be given easier access to Italian citizenship. There are also no remarkable differences between language groups.

We can therefore conclude that the majority of South Tyroleans consider citizenship as something very important for a person's life chances. They also express an open and inclusive attitude towards access to citizenship and the possibility of dual citizenship

– a clear majority is in favour of allowing dual citizenship as well as facilitating the naturalisation of immigrants. For the younger generation, citizenship is less important and they are even more tolerant with respect to dual citizenship and naturalisation. It is very remarkable that there are only slight differences between the language groups. This makes it even more interesting to explore the attitudes of the different groups towards granting Austrian citizenship to German- and Ladin-speaking South Tyroleans.

2.2 Ethnic-national affiliation

The attitude which South Tyroleans have towards the question of an additional Austrian citizenship is certainly dependent upon their general ethno-national identification. Thus, it seems appropriate to first examine to which territorial-political unit or which identity (cultural) community South Tyroleans feel they belong and how relevant Austria is in this context. The distinction between language groups is particularly important in this regard.

Table 14.1. First and second ethnic-national affiliation by language group (sum of percentages)

Foremost and second affiliation	Total	German	Italian	Ladin
(Sample size)	(700)	(446)	(217)	(33)
South Tyrolean (German or Ladin)	56	76	3	(61)
South Tyrolean (Italian)	12	5	33	(0)
Altoatesino/a	10	3	28	(17)
Ladin	3	0	0	(58)
Italian	35	28	59	(20)
Tyrolean	8	11	1	(6)
Austrian	2	3	0	(0)
German	10	13	2	(6)
European	32	32	35	(17)
World citizen	14	11	23	(11)
Other	3	4	1	(0)
No answer	1	0	2	(0)

The wording of the question was: “In South Tyrol there is often talk of territorial or ethnic affiliation. What do you feel to be in the first and second place?” We can see here (Table 14.1) that by far the most important level of affiliation or identification is “South Tyrolean (German or Ladin)” with 56 per cent in total; in second place follows “Italian” at 35 per cent and in third place “European” at 32. Clearly lagging behind, with between 8 and 14 per cent, are “Altoatesina/o” (the Italian term for regional identity with regard to the

Province of Bolzano “Alto Adige”), “World citizen”, “German” and “Tyrolean”; the category “Austrian” (2 per cent) is insignificant. It is noteworthy that practically no one states that he/she is not interested in the question; however, 14 per cent of the respondents limited their answers to a single classification.

Relevant are the differences between the German- and the Italian-speaking South Tyroleans. Among the former, “South Tyroleans” are in the lead with 76 per cent, followed by “Europeans” (32 per cent) and “Italians” (28 per cent); the category “Tyroleans” is mentioned by only 11 per cent and “Austrians” by only 3. The category “Germans” mentioned by 13 per cent probably means not the Federal Republic of Germany itself but, rather, membership in the German-language community. Among the South Tyroleans with Italian as their mother tongue, “Italians” are in the lead with 59 per cent; however, “Italian-speaking South Tyrolean” and “Altoatesino/a” together even make up a little more (61 per cent). This indicates clearly that their regional identification with the province of South Tyrol is also very strong. About one third of the Italian-speaking South Tyroleans see themselves as “Europeans”. The findings for Ladin-speaking South Tyroleans are not representative; however, the available data indicate that they self-identify in a similar way to German-speaking South Tyroleans, apart from the fact that they very often identify primarily as “Ladins”.

We can therefore state that affiliation with the province of South Tyrol is the most important (or at least equal to) type of identification for all three language groups. For members of the German- and Ladin-language groups it is clearly in the foreground, followed by the reference to Europe and to Italy. For members of the Italian-language group, belonging to Italy (or the Italian nation) is on a par with regional identification, followed by the connection to Europe. Austria plays practically no role as a country of identification, not even among the German-speaking population of South Tyrol.

For a further deepening of the topic it is useful to consider all the possible associations between the various levels of territorial-national identification. Only through the synthesis of the first and second affiliation can one analyse how strongly and in what way multiple identities – the so-called hyphenated identities (Atz and Forlin 2020) – are pronounced in relation to territorial and ethnic-national belonging in South Tyrol.

Looking at the various possible combinations of first and second identities according to aspects of ethnic uniqueness or ambiguity, the following results are obtained (see Table 14.2; for statistical reasons, we limit ourselves to the most common ethno-territorial classifications for the first):

- A good fifth of all people (22 per cent) can be classified as multi-ethnic German/Ladino-Italian – i.e. they have a clearly hyphenated identity. However, most of them combine self-classification as South Tyrolean/South Tyrolean German- or Ladin-speaking with identification as Italian, which is perhaps more a commitment to the Italian state than to Italian ethnicity in the strict sense – but here the boundaries are fluid.

Table 14.2. Frequencies of second ethnic-territorial affiliations conditioned by first affiliation, percentages per row (only for the most frequent categories)

First affiliation	Second affiliation							Total cases
	South Tyrolean (German or Ladin)	South Tyrolean (Italian) Altoatesino/a	Tyrolean/ Austrian	German	Italian	European/Citizen of the world	Other/non-interested (incl. Ladin)	
South Tyrolean (German or Ladin)	0	6	13	8	27	29	17	(316)
South Tyrolean (Italian), Altoatesino/a	6	16	1	1	31	25	20	(81)
Italian	11	28	1	5	0	39	16	(105)
European/Citizen of the world	25	15	3	2	20	24	12	(131)
Total	9	12	8	6	21	28	16	(700)

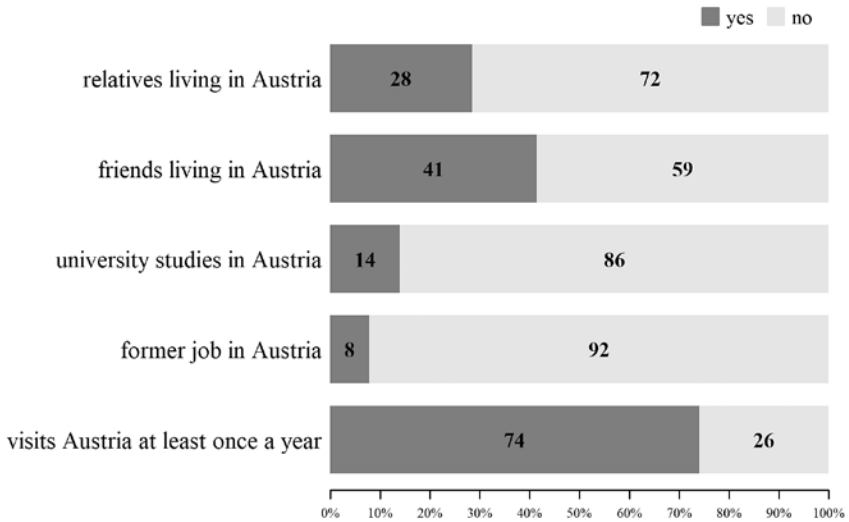
A smaller part (about 4 per cent of the total population) identifies itself both as German-speaking or Ladin-speaking South Tyroleans and as Italian-speaking South Tyroleans (in South Tyrol this group is often called the bilinguals).

- More than a third associate an ethnic German (23 per cent) or Italian (14 per cent) identity with a transnational orientation as citizens of Europe or the world.
- People identifying themselves exclusively as Germans or Ladins make up just under a quarter of the sample (21 per cent), while those who categorise themselves only as Italians make up 13 per cent. Thus, these ethnically one-dimensional identities can be found in another third of the sample.
- The rest are people with a purely transnational orientation (6 per cent) or without any indication regarding their ethnic or national affiliation (1 per cent).

Thus, on the one hand, it is true that the territorial bond is in the foreground or at least plays a very important role for South Tyroleans of all linguistic groups. On the other hand, the analysis of the combinations shows that mono-ethnic affiliations – with or without a further transnational orientation – still constitute the “normal case”. This resembles the national identities typical for migrants, many of whom identify with both their countries of origin and of destination (see [Chapter 2](#) by Haller in this volume). A decidedly multi-ethnic identity, however, is present in more than a fifth of the (autochthonous) population of

South Tyrol – not considering residents with foreign citizenship, who constitute a further 9 per cent of the total population (for more details see Atz and Forlin 2020).

Figure 14.2. The various forms of relationship of South Tyroleans to Austria



2.3 Connections to Austria

Two further questions were asked in order to capture the relationship of South Tyroleans to Austria in more detail. The first was whether respondents had a concrete biographical relationship with Austria (cf. Figure 14.2); the second was whether they are interested in Austrian politics and also watch Austrian news channels – in addition to Italian and other channels. More than a quarter of all those questioned have relatives – 41 per cent even have acquaintances – in Austria. These values are significantly higher among German-speaking South Tyroleans than among Italian-speaking ones. It is less common to have studied or worked in Austria (14 and 8 per cent respectively). However, visiting Austria (at least once a year) happens much more frequently: three-quarters of all respondents do so; even about half of all Italian-speaking South Tyroleans visit Austria quite regularly. In this regard, the Italian-speaking South Tyroleans are similar to all Italians who, in recent times, constitute a significant group of tourists in Austria – particularly in Vienna – thus intensifying the positive relations between Austria and Italy which have developed over recent decades.

These percentages largely coincide with those of the Euregio Monitoring 2017, in which three-quarters (73 per cent) of South Tyroleans also stated that they had visited Tyrol at least once a year. The surveys showed that people with relatives in the neighbour-

ing country have a significantly higher level of travel activity. A comparison between the German- and the Italian-language groups is significant: around 80 per cent of members of the German-language group stated that they had visited Tyrol last year, while the figure for the Italian-language group was 55 per cent in 2017 and 46 per cent in 2015 (Traweger and Pallaver 2018).

What about the interest in politics and the media in South Tyrol, Italy and Austria? About two-thirds of our interviewees state that they are very or quite interested in politics in South Tyrol, Italy and Europe; with regard to Austrian politics this share is only 24 per cent. There are also differences between the language groups but they are not very pronounced: Italian-speaking South Tyroleans are slightly more interested in South Tyrolean politics and significantly more in Italian politics; German-speaking South Tyroleans are slightly more interested in European politics. Politics in Austria interests 28 per cent of the German-speaking and 16 per cent the of Italian-speaking South Tyroleans. Their media preferences also reflect the strong focus on South Tyrol but there are significant differences by language group, as 70 per cent of German-speaking and 54 of Italian-speaking people regularly watch local South Tyrolean TV stations. The opposite is true for national Italian TV stations (regularly watched by only 17 per cent of German-speaking but 84 per cent of Italian-speaking South Tyroleans). Austrian, German and Swiss channels are watched regularly by about one third of the German-speaking South Tyroleans but by only 3 per cent of the Italian-speakers.

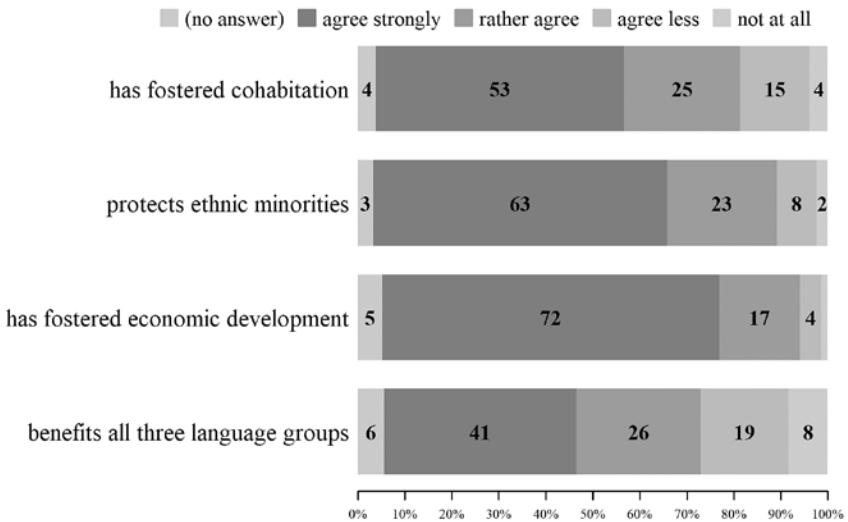
2.4 Opinions on South Tyrol's special autonomy

Finally, the assessment of the impact of South Tyrol's autonomy is also relevant to the issue of the extent to which South Tyroleans identify with their country. This evaluation is very positive overall: the majority of respondents are convinced that the special autonomy of South Tyrol has promoted economic development and ethnic cohabitation, ensures the protection of minorities and benefits all language groups equally (cf. Figure 14.3).

However, there are significant differences between the language groups: the German-speaking South Tyroleans have a much more positive attitude towards regional autonomy than the Italian-speaking ones: 89 per cent think that it protects minorities, 80 per cent that it promotes cohabitation and 73 per cent that it benefits all three language groups equally. The corresponding percentages in the Italian-language group are 75, 72 and 51 per cent. If we look only at the percentage of strong agreement ("very"), the differences become even greater. However, when asked directly how well the autonomy of South Tyrol is secured, more German- than Italian-speaking South Tyroleans (26 vs 11 per cent) answered that it is less-well secured or not secured at all. Overall, however, 70 per cent of those questioned are also convinced that South Tyrol's autonomy is well secured. Only regarding the benefits of autonomy for economic development did we find a very positive consensus in both language groups. The lesser satisfaction of Italian-speaking South Tyroleans with autonomy and with their political situation – while at the same

time being highly satisfied with the economic situation – is a phenomenon that has been known for some time from other research (see, most recently, Atz, Haller and Pallaver 2016). In the longer term, it is probably related primarily to the political fragmentation of the Italian parties in South Tyrol, which has led to an under-representation of the Italian-speaking population in the political representative bodies. In objective terms (in terms of educational level, employment and income), however, no significant differences between the language groups can be identified today (*ibid.*).

Figure 14.3. Opinions on a special autonomy for South Tyrol



2.5 Attitudes towards dual citizenship

As an introduction to the issue of Austrian citizenship for South Tyroleans, respondents were asked whether they had heard of this idea. This was indeed the case for almost all respondents (97 per cent in the German- and 94 per cent in the Italian-language group). This is certainly an indicator that this question has high salience.

The results for the direct question on the assessment of dual citizenship show that only a quarter of respondents consider it a very good (5 per cent) or good idea (20 per cent); one third (32 per cent) think it is problematic and almost a third (31 per cent) think it should be completely rejected; one in eight did not express a clear opinion on the issue. Thus 63 per cent, almost two-thirds of the South Tyrolean population, have a generally negative attitude towards granting Austrian citizenship to German- and Ladin-speaking South Tyroleans. This can only be described as a massive verdict against the promoters of this idea in Austria and South Tyrol. The results of the last South Tyrolean provincial

elections in October 2018 can also be interpreted as confirmation of this finding. In this election, the main supporters of this policy proposal in South Tyrol – the *Süd-Tiroler Freiheit* and the Freedomites (*Die Freiheitlichen*) – performed modestly or even very badly (the Freedomites experienced a strong decline from 17.9 to 6.2 per cent of the vote), while the representatives of the very successful *Liste Köllensperger* were more reserved about the idea of dual citizenship. On the other hand, the dominant party of the German-speaking population, the South Tyrolean People's Party or SVP, which had been actively promoting this idea some years ago, has been rather quiet recently.

Of great interest in this context are the attitudes of members of the two larger language groups in South Tyrol towards dual citizenship. As expected, a large majority (71 per cent) of the members of the Italian-language group are critical of the idea. In the German-language group, too, the critical voices clearly predominate with 62 per cent. If this attitude is broken down according to the social characteristics of the respondents, clear differences can only be seen by age group: younger people (aged 18–34) have a much more positive attitude towards this idea (40 per cent) than people of middle (ca. 30 per cent) and higher age (65+, 17 per cent). The difference between German- and Italian-speakers is quite limited (in support 28 vs 17 per cent).

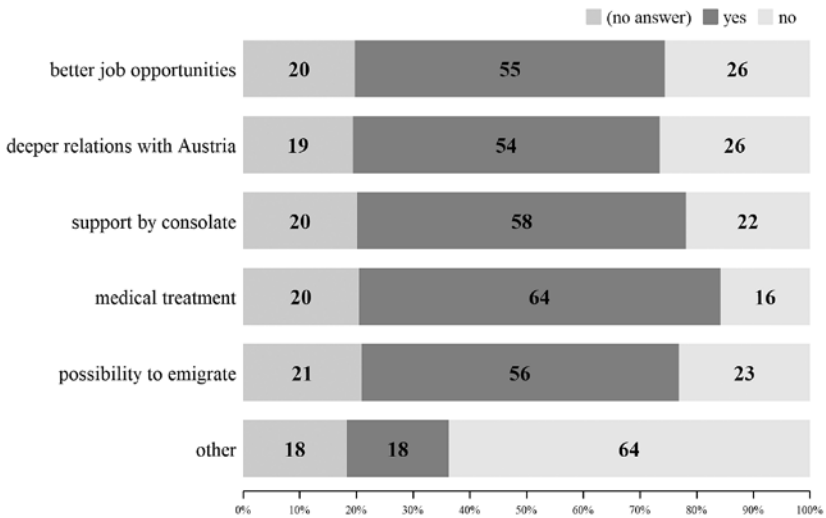
A clear rejection of the collective granting of dual citizenship to South Tyroleans is also expressed when respondents were asked about its effects on ethnic cohabitation in South Tyrol. In total, only 10 per cent think that dual citizenship would promote the peaceful coexistence of ethnic groups; 40 per cent think that it would have a negative impact, 36 per cent see no impact and a further 15 per cent do not want to give an assessment. It is particularly noteworthy that there are also hardly any significant differences of views on this issue between language groups – even among German-speakers only a minority expect positive effects and the proportion of those who expect negative effects is almost the same in both language groups.

There is another indication in our study that South Tyroleans are aware of the possible negative effects of dual citizenship and see it as a serious problem. We asked the group of interviewees who would certainly or possibly apply for Austrian citizenship the following question: "Would you refuse the additional Austrian citizenship in the end, if it is foreseeable that this possibility endangers the peaceful coexistence of the language groups?" Of those questioned, 43 per cent answered "Yes, in any case", another 27 per cent "Yes, under certain circumstances" and only 9 per cent would apply for it anyway (21 per cent did not answer the question). The German-speaking South Tyroleans answered "Yes, in any case" much less frequently (36 compared to 62 per cent of the Italian-speakers). However, if we add those who would decline "under certain circumstances", the difference disappears. Only 11 per cent of German-speaking and 7 per cent of Italian-speaking people would not give up on the Austrian citizenship option in any case.

An important question now is who would apply for Austrian citizenship if it became possible. According to the answers to our survey, this is only about one third of the

respondents – only 12 per cent would do so “definitely” and another 22 per cent “under certain circumstances”. Even among German-speakers only 13 per cent are sure to apply eventually. It is noteworthy that, in this respect, there are hardly any differences between the language groups; about a quarter of the Italian-speaking South Tyroleans would also possibly or certainly make such an application. However, there are clear differences according to the age and level of education of respondents: younger people and those with higher levels of education are more likely to apply. This may be mainly due to the fact that people with higher education tend to be more mobile and a high proportion (42 per cent) of them have studied in Austria, so they know the country and its politics quite well.

Figure 14.4. Advantages of an additional Austrian citizenship



Why would one apply for Austrian citizenship at all if it were possible? In the questionnaire we listed five reasons for this. Figure 14.4 shows that all the reasons we mentioned are considered relevant. These reasons are: better chances of working in Austria; deepening one’s relationship with Austria; support from Austrian consulates in the case of problems abroad; easier access to medical services in Austria; the possibility of emigrating to Austria in the case of a serious political or economic crisis in Italy. What is particularly important, however, is that the symbolic aspect of citizenship – deepening the relationship with Austria – is not mentioned more frequently than the more instrumental aspects.

Finally, one important question was related to the reasons for not applying for Austrian citizenship. By far the most frequently mentioned reason, at 60 per cent of respondents who are not interested in Austrian citizenship, is the statement “Italian citizenship is

sufficient for me". A further 15 per cent also think that dual citizenship endangers ethnic cohabitation in South Tyrol. About the same number stated that they did not identify with Austria. In the reactions to these statements there are surprisingly small differences between the language groups; even for the statement "I don't identify with Austria", the difference is smaller than one would expect: 13 per cent of German-speaking and 26 per cent of Italian-speaking South Tyroleans explained their lack of interest in Austrian citizenship this way. This proves once again that the issue of dual citizenship is evaluated similarly by the two major language groups.

2.6 The social determinants of the assessment of dual citizenship: a multivariate analysis⁹

A central question of this study is how strongly the attitudes of South Tyroleans to the offer of Austrian citizenship vary between the different population groups and what differences there are, especially between the German- and the Italian-language groups. The tabular analyses have already provided some indications. However, a scientifically sound statement can only be made on the basis of a multivariate analysis in which the effects of the different characteristics of the respondents are examined simultaneously. Ordinal logistic regression was used as a statistical analysis method for this purpose, as it is suitable when the variables are not scaled metrically (see Baltes-Götz 2012). In order to make the analysis manageable, questions with several categories were grouped together or partly dichotomised.

Four questions were included in the analysis as dependent variables to be explained:

- How important do you think citizenship is in a person's life? Very/rather/less/not at all?
- What is your basic position on this idea? [to give German- and Ladin-speaking South Tyroleans Austrian citizenship in addition to Italian citizenship?] Is this a very good idea a good idea/a problematic idea/to be rejected?
- Would you apply for Austrian citizenship yourself if it were possible? Yes, definitely/ Yes, under some circumstances/No, certainly not.
- What do you think? Would the granting of Austrian citizenship to South Tyroleans of German and Ladin language rather promote/rather impair/not have any effect on ethnic cohabitation in South Tyrol?

Five independent (explanatory) variables were included in the analysis: gender, age in four categories (18–34, 35–49, 50–64 and 65 years and older), level of education (dichotomised into the categories: less than high school/high school and university degree), resi-

⁹ These statistical analyses were carried out by Alice Forlin, former trainee at *apollis* – Institute of Social Research and Opinion Polling, Bolzano-Bozen.

dential area (urban/rural municipalities) and language group in two categories (German and Ladin/Italian). The results can be summarised in two respects, firstly concerning the questions involved and secondly with regard to which variables provide the best explanation for the attitudes (see Table 14.3).

Regarding the determinants of the different dimensions of attitudes towards dual citizenship, the following can be noted:

- The importance of citizenship in general: only two variables, gender and age, have a significant effect; men consider it less important compared to women; younger people (18–34) and middle-aged adults (50–64) consider citizenship less important compared to older people (65+). However, the model explains only a very small part of the overall variance.
- The assessment of dual citizenship for South Tyroleans: three variables are significant. Younger people (18–34) and adults under 50 (35–49) tend to view the idea more favourably than older people (people aged 65+); city dwellers reject the idea more strongly than inhabitants of rural communities; German-speaking South Tyroleans tend to view the idea more positively than Italian-speaking ones, who reject it relatively unanimously.
- Personal intention to apply for Austrian citizenship: here only two variables are significant. Men are more likely to apply than women; the younger a person is, the more interested he or she is in Austrian citizenship in addition to Italian citizenship (significant for all age groups).
- Consequences of dual citizenship for ethnic cohabitation in South Tyrol: four variables are significant. Men tend to see more positive effects, as do younger people (18–34) compared to those over 65; city dwellers as well as German-speaking South Tyroleans see positive effects more often than Italian-speaking South Tyroleans.

Not only in relation to the first question – where the explanatory power of the model is minimal despite the significant coefficients identified – but also in relation to the other three questions examined, the explanatory power of the statistical models is quite low (maximum 10 per cent of the total variance). This means, then, that the attitudes of South Tyroleans towards dual citizenship have little to do with socio-demographic characteristics; they are obviously essentially determined by other factors. These could be basic political and social orientations, specific milieu influences or personal experiences – all dimensions that we have not or have only partially covered in this survey.

These results confirm the tabular analyses. The most important finding here is that membership in a language group has relatively little significance for attitudes towards dual citizenship. By far the most important variable is age: younger people obviously already have a much clearer strategic-instrumental attitude towards citizenship in general and towards the dual passport for South Tyroleans in particular than older people.

Table 14.3. Multivariate analysis of the social determinants of attitudes towards dual citizenship (ordinal logistic regressions)

	Dependent variable (question)				
	Impor- tance of citizenship	Dual citizenship – a good idea?	Would you apply?	Impact on ethnic cohabitation +)	
				Quite positive	Quite negative
Parameter-Estimates (ordered logits +++)					
Gender (ref. female)	.36*	++)	-.39*	-.58*	-.19
Age group in years (ref. 65+)					
18–34	.75**	-1.17**	-1.41**	1.16*	-.06
35–49	.45	-.51*	-.99**	.23	.49
50–64	.42*	-.12	-.60**	.24	.18
Education level (ref. high school/ university)	-.00	.05	.20	.12	-.31
Residential area (ref. rural municipalities)	.00	.57**	.14	-.77*	-.06
Affiliation to language group (ref. Italian lang.)	.06	-.63**	-.40	-1.31**	-.24
Goodness of fit (Pearson)	181.41	82.48	125.58	--	
Pseudo R-Square					
Cox & Snell	.02	.12	.07	.06	
Nagelkerke	.03	.13	.09	.07	

Statistical significance: *: <.05, **: <.01;

+) Multinomial logistic regression (the characteristic does not have an ordinal scale level).

++) Variable excluded because its inclusion would violate model assumptions.

+++) The coefficient represents the natural logarithm of the estimated odds ratio between the respective category and the reference category; positive values mean that the responses with the higher code are given more frequently than in the reference category, negative values mean the opposite. Example: 18–34-year-old persons have about twice as much chance of finding citizenship unimportant as people over 65 (with otherwise identical socio-demographic values, since $\ln 0.75 = -2.12$).

This means that the worldwide trend towards liberalisation, instrumentalisation and the opening of the concept of citizenship (Joppke 2010; Spiro 2016) is also present among the South Tyrolean population. Many activists and members of the right-wing parties in South Tyrol, which promote the idea of dual citizenship, are also younger people. These results are consistent with numerous studies on political attitudes and participation which show that younger people generally tend to be less interested in traditional politics than older people, are more critical of the established political elites and also tend not to value the existing political system – and even democracy itself –

as highly as older people (for South Tyrol see Pallaver 2016; more generally, Mounk 2019; Weßels 2018).

2.7 A short look at comparable minorities in Central Eastern Europe

Fortunately, studies comparable to our survey have been carried out among ethnic minorities living in Slovakia, Serbia and Ukraine who find themselves in a similar situation. As a consequence of the redrawing of Hungary's borders in the 1920 Treaty of Trianon, more than two million ethnic Hungarians live in neighbouring countries (Slovakia, Yugoslavia, Romania and Ukraine). It is a matter of fact that the situation of the Hungarian minorities in adjacent countries is not as good as that of South Tyroleans, who obtained a particularly strong regional self-administration. In addition, Serbia and Ukraine are still not members of the European Union so Hungarians living there might be interested in Hungarian citizenship for instrumental reasons – to gain access to the huge EU labour market. However, in Slovakia and Romania, ethnic Hungarians are granted all civic and political rights and children have the possibility to attend school in their mother tongue. Two comparable surveys were carried out among the minorities concerned and their findings are very relevant for our study as well.

In 2009–2010, a representative survey among about 800 ethnic Hungarians living in Slovakia was carried out (as part of the EC ENRI-East project), supplemented by in-depth interviews and by a survey among Slovaks in Hungary (Machacek 2011). The survey found that ethnic Hungarians in Slovakia in general find themselves in a good situation, all basic rights are provided and the use of the Hungarian language is guaranteed. The survey asked which personal and social characteristics (age, gender, occupation, citizenship, ethnic identity etc.) were the most important for the respondents. It turned out that all are important but none is prevalent; only for 18 per cent was ethnic identity the most important component of identity – somewhat less than gender identity. The most important levels of identification were the local (Slovaks in Hungary) and regional ones (Hungarians in Slovakia). The dominant form of identification (endorsed by 65 per cent) was: "I am a Hungarian living in Slovakia". Similar results were obtained in surveys among ethnic Hungarians in Slovakia and ethnic Romanians in Serbia and Ukraine, carried out by an international research team (Iglesias, Sata and Vass 2016) in 2013–2014. In their study, semi-structured interviews were carried out with about 70 individuals and discussions held with 14 focus groups. This study also found that Hungarians in Slovakia are guaranteed all basic rights but, nevertheless, felt torn by some feelings of insecurity ("We are taxpayers but do not feel that we have a homeland"). Romanians living in Serbia and Ukraine felt more secure. All of them, however, had very strong regional identities; sometimes, even an "idealised view" of their multicultural region emerged. At the same time, in both studies the ethnic minorities did not feel close to the people in their cultural "homeland". Some ethnic Hungarians in Slovakia told us that they were not considered as "true" Slovaks by their co-citizens nor as real Hungarians by people

in Hungary. Asked about their interest in Hungarian citizenship, the results were quite similar to those obtained in South Tyrol – there was little interest. Among these minorities, citizenship in their present state was not considered as an “empty shell... there is a sense of identification with and maybe even loyalty to the state” because it provided all basic rights and opportunities for political participation (Iglesias et al. 2016, 27). In both studies, there was also little interest in obtaining the citizenship of the ethnic kin state.

Thus, we can conclude that these findings strongly support our results obtained for South Tyrol. Ethnic minorities who had long been living on the territory of another, state enjoying all political and social rights and some degree of autonomy, identified mostly with their place and region of living but not with their ethnic kin state. This finding is also in line with the argument proposed in [Chapter 2](#) by Haller in this volume – that it is the concrete living experience over generations which determines ethno-national attitudes.

3. Summary

The main topic of this study was to investigate the attitude of the South Tyrolean population towards a policy proposal announced by the Austrian government – namely to grant an additional Austrian citizenship to German- or Ladin-speaking inhabitants of South Tyrol (who are Italian citizens). This specific question was integrated into a larger theoretical and political context in two ways: on the one hand the importance attached to citizenship by the people; on the other, the political units with which the South Tyroleans identify today, especially their relationship to Austria. A focus was put on the differences between language groups in their perceptions and attitudes with regards to the proposal of dual citizenship and related issues.

The main findings can be summarised as follows:

- Citizenship is, as expected, an important aspect of social integration for the South Tyroleans. They express an open and inclusive attitude in this respect: the clear majority is in favour of allowing dual citizenship as well as facilitating the naturalisation of immigrants.
- With regards to ethno-territorial affiliation, our study confirms the results of several previous surveys: the vast majority of respondents identify primarily with “South Tyrol” (*Südtiroler/in*, *Sudtirolese* or *Altoatesino/a*); this also applies to a good half of the Italian-speaking South Tyroleans. In second place we find the self-classifications “European” and “World citizen” followed by “Italian” (Italian-speaking respondents identify as often with Italy as with South Tyrol). Only very small proportions of German- and Ladin-speaking respondents categorise themselves as Tyroleans, Austrians or Germans. Questions as to whether the respondent has relatives and friends there and how often he or she visits Tyrol or Austria revealed that many South Tyroleans in practice have relatively close relations to Austria. More than half of the

German-speaking respondents regularly follow the news on Austrian TV or radio programmes; among the Italian-speaking, the proportions are of course significantly lower. South Tyroleans are very well informed about the proposition to grant them additional Austrian citizenship. However, only about a quarter of them consider this a (very) good idea; one third find it problematic while another third think it should be completely rejected. Of the respondents, 40 per cent believe that dual citizenship is likely to impair the (peaceful) cohabitation of the language groups in South Tyrol; even among members of the German-language group, only a minority sees positive effects.

- The findings on the central issue – the respondents' own interest in dual citizenship – are surprisingly clear: only about one third of South Tyroleans declare an intention to eventually take up the offer of Austrian citizenship (12 per cent "definitely", 22 per cent "under certain circumstances").
- Those respondents who expressed a concrete interest in Austrian citizenship would expect better job opportunities in Austria and access to medical services there, easier opportunities to emigrate to Austria in the event of a deep crisis in Italy, support from Austrian consulates in foreign countries in case of emergencies and also the deepening of relations with Austria. This last purely intrinsic, identity-related motivation does not play a special role but turns out to be roughly as strong as instrumental ones.

The most astonishing result of the study is not so much that scepticism about the proposition of an additional Austrian citizenship prevails but that there are only very small differences between German-, Ladin- and Italian-speaking South Tyroleans concerning this issue.

Generally, the South Tyrolean society is described as a good example of the resolution of ethnic conflicts but, at the same time, as only a partially integrated multi-ethnic society. Therefore, it was quite unexpected to discover such a homogeneity in the attitudes regarding the proposition of additional Austrian citizenship between the ethnic-linguistic groups. In political terms, this means that granting the additional Austrian citizenship only to a part of the population, namely members of the German- and the Ladin-language groups, would not take account of the similarity of perceptions with respect to that question within the South Tyrolean society. Instead of achieving the presumed aim of strengthening relationships with the fatherland, it could in fact endanger social and political cohesion in South Tyrol.

It could be assumed that the low interest in such dual citizenship shown in this study is due to the fact that it would bring very few real benefits in the case of South Tyrol: in particular, the membership of the European Union of the two states concerned – Italy and Austria – and the high level of minority protection enjoyed by the German- and Ladin-speaking populations through the special autonomy could be responsible for this. However, it seems that, in addition to these instrumental reasons, the strength of

regional identity compared to that of an external kin minority is also involved. The findings of our study are corroborated by very similar results obtained by surveys among ethnic Hungarians living in Slovakia and Romanians living in Serbia and Ukraine. In those cases, too, the main form of social and political identity was the affiliation to the region where people live. This region is seen – quite comparably to South Tyrol – as being characterised by specific positive features. There is thus little interest in obtaining the citizenship of the ethnic kin state.

Therefore, we can conclude that the proposal to grant additional Austrian citizenship to a part of the population of South Tyrol is not an issue favoured by the people concerned. On the contrary, it could damage the efforts of responsible local politicians to present the special autonomy of South Tyrol not only as an instrument of minority protection but also as a common anchor of identification for all people living in the province, especially also for members of the Italian-language group. The activities of separatist parties and movements that would interpret dual citizenship as a first step towards the separation of South Tyrol from Italy are certainly undermining such efforts to some degree. In order to intensify the relations of all parts of the South Tyrolean population with Austria, it would seem much more promising to strengthen the European region of Tyrol–South Tyrol–Trentino, a move which should not only take place at the level of the political and scientific elites but which should also involve ordinary citizens. For this to happen, what is needed is not so much an additional passport as an open border, real opportunities for personal encounters and more exchange in the political, economic, social and cultural spheres, so that individual added value is created.

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