

ABSTRACT

This paper aims to analyse the meaning and the importance of the Union citizenship in the European integration process since its establishment by Maastricht Treaty in 1993. The study begins with the description of *state citizenship* as the very notion of citizenship in Europe is traditionally linked to a nation state. Citizenship being one of the key elements of statehood, the establishment of the citizenship of the Union brings many questions on the nature of European Union itself and the future of European integration. The paper therefore examines the Union citizenship in three ways. Firstly, it traces the beginnings of the European integration project since the Rome treaty in 1957. Already in this early stage of integration we can find the core of what will become the Union citizenship later: the free movement of persons and the principle of non-discrimination. The paper follows the progressive evolution of the position of an individual in the Community legal acts and the jurisprudence of the European Court of Justice from a mere economic factor to a full-fledged Union citizen. Secondly, it focuses on the content of the Union citizenship by considering the rights it brings to the individuals concerned. A closer look on the granted rights reveals that the citizenship of the Union is limited both in its extent and its practical use. Lastly, it juxtaposes the gathered information with the existing concept of state citizenship as described in the beginning of the study. By doing this one would easily conclude that the Union citizenship is derived, mediate and instrumental and as such cannot constitute a “real” citizenship like the one on the state level. Nevertheless, the perspective brought by this paper is that the Union citizenship and its importance cannot be properly assessed having nation state as the only reference point. It needs to be conceptualised as a multi-level citizenship where both levels, the one of the Union and the one of the member states, are tiered and linked together. Such perspective takes into account the

complex character of the European Union and puts the citizenship of Union in a broader context of the integration process. Only then its importance steps forward: as an integration element which sets up the conditions and the public space for the citizens of Europe so they can have their say in the further development of the Union.