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# EUDO CITIZENSHIP OBSERVATORY

## *ACCESS TO ELECTORAL RIGHTS*

### *CHILE*

Gabriel Echeverría

December 2015



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EUDO Citizenship Observatory

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# Access to Electoral Rights

## Chile

*Gabriel Echeverría*

### 1. Introduction

Chile represents a somewhat paradoxical case regarding the extension of electoral rights to groups other than resident citizens. On the one hand, it was the first Latin American country and one of the first countries in the world to offer such rights to non-citizen residents. As early as 1925, the newly approved Constitution recognised the right of foreign residents to vote in municipal elections. On the other hand, with respect of the franchise of non-resident citizens, Chile has been a latecomer. It was only in 2014, after more than two decades of public and political debates, that the Senate approved the right to vote for Chileans living abroad. Such a remarkable difference can be linked to the specific migratory and political history of the country.

Indeed, the Chilean franchise has been intimately bound up with its political history. In 1925, a sizable community of European immigrants was living in Chile, similar to the other countries of the region, for instance Argentina, Uruguay or Brazil. This community was the result of the continuous influxes from Europe that had been taking place since the last decades of the nineteenth century. While the number of Europeans in Chile was as extensive as those in the other mentioned countries, immigrants played an important role in the receiving Chilean society. In the first decades of the 20th century immigrants were among the major investors in the mining sector, which was the backbone of the Chilean national economy and the country's nascent industry. The granting of electoral rights can be understood as a way to recognise this role. Non-citizen residents who had lived in the country for more than 5 years and who met the requirements for active citizenship were allowed to vote in the municipal elections. Writing about immigrant enfranchisement in Latin America, Escobar argues that the extension of the franchise to foreigners revealed 'first, that the image of immigrants they [governments] had in mind was still that of the white, skilled and successful European (ignoring the Arab, Asian and Latin American immigrants also residing in the country) and second, the deference of these leaders towards the European immigrant' (Escobar 2015). However this may be, this path-breaking advancement set the conditions for future ones.

Between 1973 and 1990, the military regime of General Augusto Pinochet encouraged some electoral rights and discouraged others. In 1980, the approval of the current Constitution further expanded the electoral rights of non-citizen residents. Foreigners were allowed to vote in national elections but not to stand for election. Ironically, this occurred during the period of

lowest immigration and was interpreted as an attempt by the regime to gain support among the wealthy families of foreigners residing in the country.

As regards the franchise of non-resident citizens, the approval of these rights has taken a much longer and tortuous path in Chile. Similar to other countries in Latin America, this has been, in part, linked to the relatively small number of emigrants in the history of the country. The first important communities of Chilean emigrants left the country in the 1970s and 1980s. Yet, the reasons that motivated the exit flows had an important impact on the issue under discussion. Although many emigrants left the country for economic reasons, the majority of them left for political reasons, often to avoid persecution. The Chilean diaspora became thus the main opposition force to the military regime at home. Until 1988, when the regime was finally dismantled, the relation between the Chilean state and the expatriate community was not a very constructive one. This historical precedent and its lasting consequences left a number of obstacles on the path to a more integrated relation between the state and its diaspora. It took more than two decades and discussion in the Congress of six successive proposals for the right to vote of Chileans residing abroad to get approved. The Constitution was modified in 2014 and the bill that will regulate the form and procedures of the external vote are still under discussion. The Chilean diaspora will vote for the first time in the presidential primaries and presidential elections of 2017.

## 2. Historical Background

According to the present Constitution, which was approved in 1980 and successively amended on a number of occasions, the distinction between the concepts of ‘national’ and ‘citizen’ is the fundamental mechanism by which political rights, including electoral rights, are distributed in Chile. As established in the Charter, while all individuals who are born in Chile or who are naturalised Chileans are considered nationals, a number of additional requirements need to be met in order to be considered a citizen and therefore to have access to political rights.<sup>1</sup> This distinction, which has been a common feature of all the constitutions approved in Chile since independence from Spain in 1817, was derived from the first Spanish Constitution (Cadiz Constitution of 1812). As recently pointed out by Escobar, the differentiation between ‘citizenship (participation to the polis) and nationality (belonging to the nation)’, common to many other Latin American Constitutions, ‘allows the concession of alien suffrage without having to address issues of national identity and solidarity or the value of citizenship’ (Escobar 2015: 929).

The nature, scope and extent of the requirements needed in order to be considered a citizen and therefore to enjoy access to political rights have undergone a process of continuous evolution during the prolific history of Chilean constitutionalism. Even though this evolution generally determined increasing inclusiveness regarding a number of issues, such as, age or income, improvements were not always straightforward and were often followed by retractions.

The first elections held in Chile took place in 1810. Over the next two decades, the country experienced a period of great political instability. Between 1810 and 1833, seven regulations at constitutional level were approved with corresponding Electoral Regulations

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<sup>1</sup> Constitución Política de la República del Chile 1980, Art. 10, 11 y 13.

adopted in 1810, 1812, 1813, 1818, 1823 and 1824. Although each new regulation introduced small changes, especially regarding the voting procedures, all of them shared a ‘census’ conception of the suffrage rather than a universal one. In order to vote, potential electors, who had to be male and at least 25 years of age, had to demonstrate possession of a property of a certain value, and to practice a profession or run a business. The Regulation of 1923 is worth mentioning, since it introduced a public *viva voce* voting system. Eligible voters had to voice their vote in front of the public authority.

With the approval of the Constitution of 1833, Chile reached a certain level of stability, at least concerning the legal foundations of the state. Although a number of amendments were approved in the years to follow, this Charter remained in force until 1925. Art. 8 stated: ‘Every Chilean, who is at least 25 years of age, if single, or 21 years of age, if married, and is able to read and write is an active citizen if he satisfies one of the following requirements: 1. He owns a real estate property or an invested capital. A provincial law approved every ten years will fix the value of such property or capital. 2. He has a profession, craft, employment or income which ensures an income proportional to the real estate or capital mentioned in the previous section.’<sup>2</sup> Compliance with these requirements gave full access to electoral rights and allowed people to vote and to run for public offices.

The electoral reform of 1874 progressed towards more universal suffrage by eliminating all income requirements.<sup>3</sup> While both the differentiation between single and married citizens and the literacy obligation remained, this change more than doubled the number of eligible voters.<sup>4</sup> A decade later, in 1888, a new reform further expanded access to the vote.<sup>5</sup> Art. 2 established that: “Every Chilean who is at least 21 years of age and is able to read and write is an active citizen with voting rights”<sup>6</sup>. In spite of the important progress achieved by these two reforms, the majority of the Chilean population still remained excluded since women and illiterate persons were not allowed to vote.

In 1925, under the first presidency of Arturo Alessandri Palma (1920-1925), who was a fervent supporter of universal suffrage, a new Constitution was approved. With the introduction of a new Charter, Chile was the first country in Latin America and one of the first in the world to expand the suffrage to non-citizen residents. As was the case in other South American countries, Chile had been receiving significant numbers of European migrants since the second half of the nineteenth century and even higher numbers at the beginning of the twentieth century. As pointed out by Escobar, however, ‘more than numbers’, which were certainly higher in countries like Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay, ‘these immigrants achieved significance as skilled labourers, merchants and entrepreneurs’ (Escobar 2015: 933). This importance was recognised by the granting of limited voting rights to those foreigners who met certain requirements. As stated by Art. 104, non-citizen residents who had lived in the country for more than 5 years and met all the requirements for active citizenship were allowed to vote for the municipal elections.<sup>7</sup> A subsequent reform in 1934 slightly modified this regulation, as it required 5 years of uninterrupted residence.

During the second presidency of Arturo Alessandri Palma (1932-1938) another crucial, yet timid, step towards universal suffrage was taken. Art. 19 of the 1934 reform that re-

<sup>2</sup> Constitución Política de la República del Chile 1833, Art. 8.

<sup>3</sup> Ley de Elecciones, 1874.

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.memoriachilena.cl/602/w3-article-93506.html>

<sup>5</sup> Proyecto de Reforma Constitucional, 1888.

<sup>6</sup> Proyecto de Reforma Constitucional, 1888. Art. 2.

<sup>7</sup> Constitución Política de la República del Chile 1925, Art. 104.

organised the municipal administrations recognised for the first time the right of women to participate in a political election. Although historic, this reform failed to fulfil the expectations of the first feminist organisations that had been campaigning since the early 1930s. Such disappointment, however, gave new strength to the movement and led to the creation of the Chilean Female Party in 1946. Three years later, in 1949, the government of Gabriel González Videla finally recognised women as active and full members of Chilean politics.<sup>8</sup> Women participated for the first time in a presidential election in 1952.

The constitutional reform of 1970 reduced the age for active citizenship from 21 to 18 years.<sup>9</sup> Another important step, which *de facto* established universal suffrage, was taken under the government of president Salvador Allende between 1970 and 1973. In 1972 the literacy requirement was finally abolished.<sup>10</sup>

The coup d'état orchestrated in 1973 by the military forces under the command of General Augusto Pinochet brutally interrupted the democratic history of Chile. From that year on and until 1988, all political elections were abolished. Ironically, given that elections had been abolished, under the military regime a new Constitution was approved in 1980. Art. 13 stated: 'Every Chilean who is at least 18 years of age and has not been sentenced for a felony is a citizen. The citizen status confers suffrage rights, the possibility to run as a candidate in popular elections and other rights conferred by the Constitution or the law'<sup>11</sup>. The new Charter expanded the rights of non-citizen residents, allowing them to vote in national elections and referendums but not to be elected. This expansion of immigrant suffrage coincided with the period of lowest immigration when many Chileans were leaving the country for political and economic reasons. Enfranchising foreign residents allowed them to participate in the referendum to ratify the 1980 Constitution, which gave Pinochet eight more years in power. After the plebiscite held in 1988 and the solid victory of the 'no' side against the military regime, democracy was re-established in Chile. The first presidential elections were held a year later and inaugurated a period of political stability that lasts until today.

However, the percentage of effective voters (among those entitled) continuously decreased in the subsequent elections. Between 1989 and 2013, the number of voters in the presidential elections decreased from 86,8% in 1989; to 82,4% in 1993; 73,1% in 1999; 69,0% in 2005; 59,5 in 2009; reaching its lowest level of 51,6 in 2013. Given a continuous contraction of electoral participation during the 2000s, another important constitutional reform affecting suffrage rights was approved in 2012 under the presidency of Sebastián Piñera (2009-2013). Whilst registration on the electoral lists had been voluntary and the vote mandatory, the new provision established a system of automatic registration and voluntary vote. With this reform, all Chilean citizens and all foreign residents who met the requirements established by the law were automatically entered on the Electoral Registry.<sup>12</sup>

Although access to suffrage rights of non-citizen residents was a long-time feature in Chile, the debate over the inclusion of non-resident citizens did not emerge until the 1990s. The end of the military regime set the conditions for new social demands to emerge and in particular for those who looked favourably on the Chilean diaspora. The first legislative

<sup>8</sup>Modifica la Ley General sobre Inscripciones Electorales, 1949.

<sup>9</sup>Proyecto de Reforma Constitucional, 1970. Art. 1

<sup>10</sup>Ley 17626.

<sup>11</sup>Constitución Política de la República del Chile 1980, Art. 13.

<sup>12</sup>Ley Orgánica Constitucional sobre Sistema de Inscripciones Electorales y Servicio Electoral No. 18556, Art. 5 and 6.

initiative to allow Chilean emigrants to vote from abroad was proposed in 1991 by Congressman Carlos Dupre (Toro and Walker 2007). Over the next two decades, another five proposals (1993, 2000, 2005, 2006a, 2006b) were discussed in Congress, but none were adopted. Although the demands from migrant organisations and public opinion within the country became increasingly insistent during the 2000s, the effective expansion of electoral rights to non-resident citizens only materialised in 2014 under the presidency of Michelle Bachelet (2013-2017). The constitutional reform of that year approved the proposal presented by senators Allende, Alvear, Espina, Larrín and Prieto a year before. The new paragraph added to Art. 13 of the Charter stated: ‘Citizens entitled to vote who reside outside the country can exercise their right from abroad in presidential primary elections, elections of the President of the Republic and in national referendums. An organic constitutional law will establish the procedure to register in the Electoral Registry and regulate the manner in which electoral and plebiscitary processes will be conducted abroad, in accordance with the provisions of the first and second paragraphs of Art. 18’.<sup>13</sup> As evidenced by the new text, non-resident citizens are excluded from legislative and municipal elections. The first occasions in which Chilean emigrants will vote are the primary and presidential election scheduled for 2017.

### 3. Eligibility: Who has electoral rights under national law?

Since the approval of the Constitution in 1980 and the constitutional reform of 2014, three categories of individuals are officially recognised as having electoral rights in Chile: Chilean citizen residents, Chilean non-resident citizens, and non-citizen residents in Chile<sup>14</sup>. Of these three categories, only citizen residents (the default category) enjoy the full range of active and passive voting rights at all levels of election. Each of the other two categories has their own specific limitations, discussed in greater detail in this section.

#### 3.1. Citizen residents

Chilean citizen residents who are at least 18 years of age and have not been sentenced for a felony can vote in all elections, at all levels. The types and levels of elections include: national legislative, national presidential, national referendum, regional legislative, local mayoral and local referendum. The vote is voluntary<sup>15</sup>.

As established by Art. 16 of the Constitution, citizens are disenfranchised in the case of: A. mental disability (confirmed by a judge); B. charges of felony that can result in a jail sentence or a crime qualified by law as terrorist behaviour; C. in the case of a sentence by the Constitutional Tribunal according to Art. 19 of the Constitution.<sup>16</sup> Citizens who fall into categories B and C are not allowed to vote until the expiry of their sentences.

The Constitution also sets the age thresholds for passive voting rights. The required age to run as a candidate for President, Vice-President or Senator is 35 years,<sup>17</sup> for Deputy 21

<sup>13</sup>Constitución Política de la República del Chile 1980, Art. 13.

<sup>14</sup>Constitución Política de la República del Chile 1980, Art. 13.

<sup>15</sup>Constitución Política de la República del Chile 1980, Art. 15.

<sup>16</sup>Constitución Política de la República del Chile 1980, Art. 16 and 17.

<sup>17</sup>Constitución Política de la República del Chile 1980, Art. 25 and 50.



years<sup>18</sup> and for all other elective offices at least 18 years.<sup>19</sup> In order to run as candidates, citizens must meet the same requirements specified by Art. 16, that enable them to access suffrage rights.<sup>20</sup> They lose candidacy rights when they no longer meet one of these requirements.<sup>21</sup> As explained above, mental disability represents therefore, a limitation for both the active and passive franchise.

### **3.2. Non-resident citizens**

Electoral rights were accorded to non-resident citizens in 2014. The new paragraph added to Art. 13 of the Constitution established the current constitutional framework for the external vote. Despite the constitutional recognition of this right, the bill that will regulate this matter is currently still under discussion. At this moment, it is therefore impossible to describe the mechanics of the new voting system.

#### *Eligibility criteria*

According to Art. 13 of the Constitution ‘[t]he citizens entitled to vote who are outside the country can exercise their right from abroad in presidential primary elections, elections of President of the Republic and in national referendums’. The same article further specifies: ‘An organic constitutional law shall establish the procedure to register in the Electoral Registry and regulate the manner in which electoral and plebiscitary processes will be conducted abroad, in accordance with the provisions of the first and second paragraphs of Art. 18’.<sup>22</sup> Out-of-country voting is therefore not possible in local elections. Non-resident citizens, can participate only in national presidential elections and national referendums.

#### *Mode of Representation*

Since the bill that will regulate external vote has not yet been approved, at this moment it is not possible to describe the mechanics of the new voting system.

### **3.3. Non-citizen residents**

Non-citizen residents obtained electoral rights in Chile in 1925. The extension of political participation rights to this category was not the result of pressures by internal immigrant communities, or by specific political groups. Instead, it appeared as a form of recognition by the Chilean state for the valuable contribution made by many of those migrants to the hosting society. Although certainly ahead of its time, such extension was rather limited, as it only allowed the participation of some foreigners in local elections.

A more substantial participation of non-citizen residents was introduced with the

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<sup>18</sup>Constitución Política de la República del Chile 1980, Art. 25 and 48.

<sup>19</sup>Constitución Política de la República del Chile 1980, Art. 48 and Ley Orgánica Constitucional sobre Gobiernos y Administraciones Regionales No. 19175, Art. 31.

<sup>20</sup>Constitución Política de la República del Chile 1980, Art. 48.

<sup>21</sup>Constitución Política de la República del Chile 1980, Art. 25, 48, 50 and 124.

<sup>22</sup>Constitución Política de la República del Chile 1980, Art. 13.

approval of the current Constitution in 1980. The new Charter enabled foreigners to vote in national elections and referendums but not to be elected. Art. 14 specified: ‘Foreigners, who have resided in Chile for at least five years, and who meet the requirements indicated in Art. 13, will have suffrage rights in the cases and following the procedures established by the law’.<sup>23</sup> As explained in section 2 this happened during a period of political emigration and low immigration. After the end of the military regime, however, this trend was reversed. Over the next two decades, the country received an increasing number of migrants. In 2010 the number of non-citizen residents reached the highest level since Second World War, representing 2% of the total population. The estimates of percentages of main origins of the total foreign population are as follows: Peru (37%), Argentina (17%), Bolivia (6.8%), Ecuador (5.4%), Colombia (3.7%), Rest of the World (29%)(OIM 2011).

While Art. 14 of the Constitution sets the general legal framework for the franchise of non-citizen residents, the specific requirements, modalities and procedures are regulated by the Organic Constitutional Law No. 18700 on Voting and Scrutiny. Art. 60 states: ‘Citizens with suffrage rights and foreigners inscribed in the Electoral Registry, who are at least 18 years of age, are entitled electors’.<sup>24</sup> Non-citizen residents can, therefore, participate in national legislative and presidential elections and referendums; in regional legislative elections; and in local elections and local referendums. Neither the Constitution nor the Electoral Law include any exception to the general rule. Under Chilean law, all non-citizen residents, from any country, are granted the same electoral rights. No candidacy rights are granted to foreigners since the main condition to run as a candidate for all public offices is to be a citizen.<sup>25</sup>

### **3.4. Indigenous minorities and/or minorities of African origin**

Neither the Chilean Constitution nor the other regulations affecting the franchise include any specific provision regarding the political participation of indigenous minorities or populations of African origin.

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<sup>23</sup>Constitución Política de la República del Chile 1980, Art. 14.

<sup>24</sup>Ley Orgánica Constitucional sobre Votaciones Populares y Escrutinios, No. 18700, Art. 60.

<sup>25</sup>Constitución Política de la República del Chile 1980, Art. 13, Art. 25, 48, 50 and 124.

## 4. Exercising electoral rights

The Constitution, the Organic Constitutional Law on Electoral Inscription and Electoral Service, and the Organic Constitutional Law on Voting and Scrutiny regulate the rules and procedures to access the ballot for each category of eligible voters<sup>26</sup>. As stated by Art. 18 of the Constitution and Art. 2 and Art. 47 of the Organic Constitutional Law on Electoral Inscription and Electoral Service, the Electoral Service (*Servicio Electoral*) and the Regional Electoral Tribunal (*Tribunal Electoral Regional*) are the institutions in charge of managing the whole electoral process in the national territory.<sup>27</sup>

### 4.1. Registration Procedures: Becoming a voter

According to Art. 18 of the Constitution, paragraph No. 2 '[a]n Organic Constitutional Law will establish an electoral register system, under the jurisdiction of the Electoral Service, which will include all those who meet the requirements established by the law'.<sup>28</sup> As further specified by the Organic Constitutional Law on Electoral Inscription and Electoral Service '[t]he Electoral Service creates a permanent Electoral Register that will include the name of all Chileans older than 17 years of age who meet the requirements indicated by paragraph 1 and 3 of the Constitution. The Electoral Register will also include the name of other Chileans and foreigners older than 17 years who meet the suffrage requirements specified by Art. 13 and 14 of the Constitution. [...] The Electoral Register will be used to create the Electoral Record (*Padrones Electorales*) that will be used in each election or referendum and will include only those electors allowed to vote in that specific election'.<sup>29</sup>

#### *Citizen Residents*

Art. 5 of the Organic Constitutional Law on Electoral Inscription and Electoral Service establishes that citizens will be automatically included in the Electoral Register.<sup>30</sup>

#### *Non-citizen residents*

Art. 6 of the Organic Constitutional Law on Electoral Inscription and Electoral Service establishes that non-citizen residents will be automatically included in the Electoral Register once they meet the age (18) and residence requirements (5 years) established by the Constitution<sup>31</sup>.

#### *Non-resident citizens*

<sup>26</sup>Ley Orgánica Constitucional sobre Votaciones Populares y Escrutinios No. 18700 and Ley Orgánica Constitucional sobre Sistema de Inscripciones Electorales y Servicio Electoral No. 18556.

<sup>27</sup>Ley Orgánica Constitucional sobre Votaciones Populares y Escrutinios No. 18700, Art. 2 and 47.

<sup>28</sup>Constitución Política de la República del Chile 1980, Art. 18.

<sup>29</sup>Ley Orgánica Constitucional sobre Sistema de Inscripciones Electorales y Servicio Electoral No. 18556, Art. 3.

<sup>30</sup>Ley Orgánica Constitucional sobre Sistema de Inscripciones Electorales y Servicio Electoral No. 18556, Art. 3, Art. 5.

<sup>31</sup>Ley Orgánica Constitucional sobre Sistema de Inscripciones Electorales y Servicio Electoral No. 18556, Art. 3, Art. 5 and Constitución Política de la República del Chile 1980, Art. 13 and 14.

Regarding the registration of eligible citizens on the Electoral Register, the law does not distinguish between resident and non-resident citizens. This means that non-resident citizens are also automatically registered on the Electoral Register. Since the bill that will regulate the external vote has not yet been approved, at this moment is not possible to know whether special registration procedures and lists will be created for non-resident citizens.

#### **4.2. Registration Procedure: Becoming a candidate**

The registration procedure to become a candidate for any elective office is regulated by the Organic Constitutional Law on Voting and Scrutiny. As stated by Art. 3: ‘The President and Secretary of the Central Board of each political party or political parties forming a coalition (which have agreed to an electoral pact) must make a written declaration to the Director of the Electoral Service or the respective Regional Director presenting the candidates they intend to enrol, accompanying the request with the legally required documents. Independent candidates must make their petition personally with the legally required documents and a certification of a minimum number of sponsors as established by law’.<sup>32</sup> It is important to remember that non-citizen residents cannot run as candidates.

#### **4.3. Casting the vote**

As established by the Organic Constitutional Law on Voting and Scrutiny the only available voting method for both resident and non-resident citizens is by personally voting at the polling station in the district where the voter is registered. ‘The vote will be cast by each elector as a result of a secret and free act. In order to guarantee his/her independence, the members of the authorities at the polling station will assure that the elector enters the cabin alone’.<sup>33</sup> Art. 62 further specifies: ‘The Chilean elector will present his/her national identification document or passport. The foreign elector will present his/her identification document for foreigners. No other document or certificate will be allowed’.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup>Ley Orgánica Constitucional sobre Votaciones Populares y Escrutinios No. 18700, Art. 3.

<sup>33</sup>Ley Orgánica Constitucional sobre Votaciones Populares y Escrutinios No. 18700, Art. 60.

<sup>34</sup>Ley Orgánica Constitucional sobre Votaciones Populares y Escrutinios No. 18700, Art. 62.

## 5. Conclusion

The constitutional reforms of the early 1970s gave Chilean citizens universal suffrage for the first time. After the reduction of the age requirement to 18 years in 1970, the reform approved by President Salvador Allende in 1972 eliminated the literacy requirement as the last discriminatory barrier. This achievement was the outcome of a long history of successive amendments that progressively eroded participation barriers, granting electoral rights to more and more sectors of the national population. Since the approval of the first constitutional Charter in 1810, the most important modifications that affected the right to vote were the elimination of income requirement in 1874, the extension of full electoral rights to women in 1949, and the elimination of literacy requirement in 1972.

The extension of electoral rights in Chile shows a number of peculiarities. Chile has been the first Latin American, and one of the first countries in the world, to offer electoral rights to non-citizen residents. At the same time, the franchise of both resident and non-resident citizens has developed in a paradoxical way. Voting rights have been suspended for almost two decades, during the military rule. Non-resident citizens have been granted electoral rights only recently, and the Chilean diaspora will exercise their voting rights for the first time in the 2017 presidential primaries and presidential elections.

The extension of electoral rights in Chile, and in particular the granting of external electoral rights to non-resident citizens, can be understood as part of the expansive wave that has involved more than fifty countries worldwide since the 1990s. In Latin America, after the pioneer cases of Brazil and Argentina which introduced external electoral rights for their citizens in 1988 and 1993 respectively, a second wave involved Venezuela and Peru in 1998, Colombia in 2001, Honduras in 2001, the Dominican Republic in 2004, Mexico and Ecuador in 2006, Bolivia, Costa Rica and Panama in 2009, Paraguay in 2011 and El Salvador in 2014. The only countries that are still waiting for the approval of electoral rights for their expatriates are Nicaragua, Guatemala, Uruguay and Cuba. As regards the right to vote for non-citizen residents, Chile is one of eight Latin-American countries that recognise this right, the others being Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Paraguay, Uruguay and Venezuela (Emmerich & Peraza Torres 2011).

Chile is an interesting case study, which clearly reveals how extension of the franchise to immigrants and to emigrants is not necessarily linked and may display important asynchronies. This report has provided a number of historical and political reasons that may contribute to explain such difference.

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