

# THE EDUCATIONAL SUCCESS AND LABOUR-MARKET INTEGRATION OF IMMIGRANT DESCENDANTS IN EUROPE

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## **Extended abstract**

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The children of migrants are an increasingly important part of Western European societies although their integration continues to be problematic (e.g. Algan et al., 2010; Chiswick and DebBurman, 2004; Crul and Vermeulen, 2003a; 2003b; Crul, Schneider, and Lelie, 2012; Eremenko and Bennett, 2018; Heath et al., 2008; Penn and Lamber, 2009).

Socio-economical characteristics of youths and their origin family as well as ethnic identity influence their life trajectories, particularly in terms of educational and occupational performances; the offspring of immigrants and natives do not enjoy equal opportunities and they are not equally able to develop their potential. At school, descendants of immigrants suffer a number of negatives with respect to their autochthonous counterparts: more school dropouts, lower academic performances and higher concentrations in vocational secondary schools. (e.g. Alba et al., 2011; Schnepf, 2007; Heath and Rethon, 2014; White and Kaufman, 1997).

In the labour market, second-generation migrants are more likely to be unemployed, underemployed or to have only precarious employment (Birkelund et al., 2017; Brekke, 2007; Crul, Schneider, and Lelie, 2012; Sirin, 2005; Heath and Cheung, 2007).

This applies both to longstanding immigration countries – where large shares of immigrant offspring are of working age – and to more recent immigration countries – where the children of migrants are mostly to be found in schools, though a significant number have entered the labour market within the last decade.

The reasons for these educational and occupational shortcomings are difficult to grasp. Previous research has highlighted a number of factors. At school, the social, cultural and economic backgrounds of the origin family (Heath and Brinbaum, 2014; Brinbaum and Lutz, 2017; Boudon, 1974; Shavit and Blossfeld, 1993), as well as school segregation dynamics (Borjas, 1998; Bayer et al., 2004; Massey and Denton, 1988; Tjaden and Hunkler, 2017), appear to be important predictors. But the “human capital” differences are unable to fully explain all the disadvantages in the labour-market trajectories of the descendants of immigrants (Portes and Rumbaut, 1996; Kao and Tienda, 2005; Hadiar and Scharf 2018). For example, host country’s institutional features are likely to affect

the integration process of migrants and their offsprings (Cebolla-Boado and Finotelli 2015) in particular in segmented labour market (Piore 1975).

This suggests the need for a broader perspective embracing additional explanatory factors, including institutional and *de facto* barriers. In some countries not only is citizenship difficult to achieve, but many job positions – in the public sector, for example – are not accessible to non-nationals. In addition to these legal constraints, direct and indirect discrimination mechanisms inhibit integration dynamics. Unlike their parents, who worked mainly in sectors where autochthonous people refused to work, the descendants of immigrants aspire to find a job in a broader range of sectors and positions. Here they are more likely to face discrimination.

Despite the existence of previous cross-national researches (e.g. ;Crul, Schneider, Lelie, 2012; Gibson, 1997; Levels and Dronkers, 2008; Penn and Lambert, 2009), what is missing in the literature is empirical research that: firstly, develops well-grounded systematic research explaining cross-national European variation in the educational disadvantages suffered by immigrants' descendants; and that secondly, analyses which “hard” and “soft” barriers inhibit the integration of immigrant offspring in the labour market in both longstanding and more recent European immigration countries. This paper, which is part of more broadly collaborative research project, reviews the main and most significant findings of a set of original empirical research for a large number of European countries. In the first part, we provide empirical evidence to complement the sparse findings on the micro-level processes shaping the educational trajectories of immigrant offspring in Europe, thereby focusing on the efficiency of educational systems and school policies in fostering the academic integration of second-generation migrants. The combination of a variety of data sources and methodologies will allow for robust empirical evidence to be deployed, evidence that can explain cross-national heterogeneous European patterns, while flagging up country-specific patterns and micro-level processes that hold back second-generation students. Accordingly, the following research questions are addressed: do schools' characteristics, activities and resource-allocation policies make a difference? Which individual and family characteristics exacerbate or narrow educational disadvantages in the second generation? Do such characteristics affect descendants of immigrants and natives differently, and if so how? With this kind of a general perspective, it is important to provide in-depth analyses for two Southern European contexts (Italy and Spain), where the education of migrants is still an under-researched topic. The paper provides pieces that assess the generality of previous findings and to explore the specific inequality patterns that are emerging in these more recent immigration contexts.

In the second part, we aim to review fresh evidence for ethnic inequalities in labour-market trajectories in selected European countries. This includes both longstanding (France and the

Netherlands) and more recent immigration countries (Italy and Spain). Accordingly, the following research questions are addressed: to what extent can traditional measures (such as ethnic origins, age, gender, prior education, educational and the occupational characteristics of parents) explain observed inequalities in the labour market? Is the experience of longstanding immigration somehow useful to more recent immigration countries? Emphasis tends to be put on “soft” and “hard” labour market entry barriers in more recent countries of immigration; while in countries of longstanding immigration the focus is upon short- and long-term labour market returns and discrimination patterns. In explaining inequalities in the labour market, there is the challenge of finding representative datasets to examine, simultaneously, ethnic origins, social background and labour-market outcomes. Accordingly, we also review innovative results drawn from new *ad hoc* datasets on the topic. This allows covering under-researched issues – e.g. discrimination and long-term labour-market returns – while including both longstanding and more recent immigration countries. The downside of this approach is that, unlike the education section, labour-market studies do not aim to carry out standardized analyses that would permit rigorous cross-national comparisons. We have no intention of “ranking countries”. Rather, we are interested in exploring whether there are common processes of labour-market penalisation for migrants and their descendants in different countries.

Methodologically speaking, the review includes both cross-disciplinary and innovative research in several respects. Firstly, it considers a variety of quantitative methods including longitudinal and decomposition analysis, multilevel approach and geo-localization procedures. Secondly, in-depth qualitative studies complemented analyses for a better interpretation of quantitative results. Thirdly, relevance is given not only to national but also to local contexts in incorporating immediate migrant descendants. Fourth, all contributions analyse the patterns of immigrant descendants in comparison with native patterns. Finally, migration experts from different fields in the political and social sciences aim to produce up-to-date empirical evidence that not only enhance scientific knowledge of the offspring of immigrants in Europe but that, also, offer policy-relevant conclusions. Overall, new policies and strategies are needed for helping and integrating the children of immigrants: policies that remove obstacles and that help the descendants of migrants to fully develop their potential.

We conclude by identifying a set of relevant research questions that remain unanswered and proposing recommendations for future research.

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