

THE TRANSATLANTIC TASK FORCE ON IMMIGRATION AND INTEGRATION

PATHWAYS TO SUCCESS FOR THE CHILDREN OF IMMIGRANTS

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MPI and Bertelsmann Stiftung have convened a task force to promote thoughtful immigration policies and assess and respond to the profound challenges of integrating immigrants and building stronger communities on both sides of the Atlantic. It addresses its recommendations to European Union institutions and Member State governments, the governments of the United States and Canada, and state and local governments and civil society everywhere.

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Introduction

The successful integration of the children of immigrants is now among the foremost policy challenges for Europe. The children born to postwar migrants in Europe have finished their education and are now of working age, whether they participate in the labor market or not. Evidence shows, however, that their opportunities and life chances are significantly inferior to those children born to nonimmigrants.

The children of immigrants are a very diverse group. The largest two components of that group are children of labor migrants and children of migrants from former European colonies. The children of refugees are also a growing group although most are still young. The life chances and future careers of these groups of immigrant youth are shaped both by resources from within their own families and communities, and by the opportunities provided by educational and social institutions.

This policy brief looks at pathways to success for the children of immigrants (often called the second generation) in Europe. It focuses especially on the role of the different tracking systems in Europe. The research reveals that European countries have much to learn from each other's educational practices; with this in mind, the policy brief identifies ways in which policymakers can improve the educational prospects of the children of immigrants.

The Children of Immigrants in School

The children of immigrants are now a prominent presence in many European school districts. In Amsterdam and Rotterdam, they constitute the majority of schoolchildren; in Brussels, the second generation constitutes over 40 percent of the school-age population; and, in London, English is a second language for a third of all schoolchildren. Unfortunately, the performance of these children generally lags behind children of nonimmigrants in all school-success indicators: they drop out at higher rates, repeat grades more frequently, and are concentrated in the least challenging educational tracks.¹

The educational gap between them and children of native-born parents is of great concern to policymakers and politicians in local and national governments. There is an ongoing debate over whether the “new second generation” — mostly children born to migrant guest workers who arrived in Europe in the 1960s and 1970s — are able to move up the educational ladder or whether they will form a

new underclass in Europe's largest cities.² While such concerns are often exaggerated for political purposes, no one can doubt that the education gap is undermining social cohesion and damaging the economic well-being of both individuals and nations.

The performance of the second generation hinges above all on two factors. First, it depends on the background characteristics of the immigrant population. Generally, children of immigrants who bring low levels of human capital into the country are the most disadvantaged. On the continent, this means mainly migrants from North Africa and Turkey. In Britain, it is migrants from former British colonies. The performance of children of refugees further demonstrates the importance of economic background. Children from better-off, educated families from Iran or Iraq tend to do well or very well, while children from rural Somalia and Ethiopia experience great difficulties in school.

Second, the performance of the second generation depends on the country of destination. The differences among countries overlay differences among immigrant groups.³ This is most clearly seen when we compare the same group with the same starting position in many countries. Such an exercise can potentially offer an insight into practices that help or hinder the educational advancement of the second generation across countries.

Practices in different countries provide a unique view of what works in educational systems. The EU Member States can be seen as a natural laboratory in which we can identify effective practices. The following analysis takes one group, the children of Turkish immigrants, to examine the strengths and weaknesses of policy.

Learning across Borders: The Case of the Turkish Second Generation

The following analysis focuses on the position of the Turkish second generation across four EU countries.⁴ Turkish migrants form the largest immigrant group in Europe, numbering up to four million, and they reside in many European countries. Turkish migration followed comparable patterns everywhere. Beginning with Germany in 1961 and ending with Sweden in 1967, European countries signed official agreements on labor migration with Turkey. Labor migration peaked between 1971 and 1973, when more than half a million Turkish workers came to work in Western Europe. German industry recruited 90 percent of them.⁵

The educational position of the Turkish second generation in the five European countries under study (Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, and the Netherlands) shows startling differences. The greatest distinctions can be seen in the percentages of young people of Turkish origin in vocational tracks — considered the “lowest” secondary-school type in all countries. In France, about one-quarter of the Turkish second generation follow a vocational track while comparable figures stand at one-third for Belgium and the Netherlands. In Germany and Austria, the figure is between two-thirds and three-quarters.⁶

National contexts, therefore, vary widely in the types of opportunities available to the Turkish second generation. Although one might now be tempted to conclude that France and, to a lesser extent, the Netherlands and Belgium provide the best institutional contexts for migrants, that is not the whole story. If we look at drop-out rates, we see the reverse picture. Drop-out rates are very high in France, Belgium, and the Netherlands, and are considerably lower in Germany and Austria.⁷

Thus, it is difficult to single out one country in which the Turkish second generation has better outcomes. But we can identify what works well and what blocks mobility in a particular country.

Different Tracks

The educational track or pathway a child is on serves as a meaningful indicator of later success. Three factors account for the major differences in the proportions of the children of immigrants on vocational tracks.

One significant disparity among countries is the *age at which education begins*. In France and Belgium, Turkish second-generation children, like other children, start school at age 2 or 3. In Germany and Austria, most second-generation Turkish children only start at age 6. Thus, this cohort of children of Turkish parents in France and Belgium has about three to four more years of schooling during a crucial developmental phase in which they begin learning the language of the host nation. In France and Belgium, very young second-generation Turkish children thus find themselves in a situation almost every day in which they have to speak French (or Flemish) with both their peers and in a formal educational environment.

A second striking difference appears in the *number of face-to-face contact hours* with teachers during the years of compulsory schooling. Once again, these are below average for Turkish pupils in Germany and Austria, especially during the first part of their educational careers. Nine-year-olds in German schools have a total of 661 contact hours with teachers as compared to 1,019 hours in the Netherlands, because children in Germany and Austria only attend school on a half-day basis. In fact, Turkish children in Germany receive about ten hours less of instruction per week than those in the Netherlands.⁸ Although children in Germany and Austria are assigned more homework, help with homework is a scant resource in Turkish families. This lack of help may be a source of serious disadvantage.

A third distinction, which in combination with the first two can culminate in serious disparities, lies in *school selection mechanisms*. Germany and Austria both select at age 10. In Germany, the selection mechanism channels children into three school levels and, in Austria, into two. Coupled with the late start in formal education and the below-average number of contact hours, Turkish second-generation pupils in Germany and Austria are given little time to overcome their disadvantaged starting position. In this respect, Turkish children in Germany and Austria are in the worst possible situation. Selection in the Netherlands occurs two to four years later, and France selects at age 15. In Germany and Austria, most pupils, because of the early selection, end up in a short vocational stream — called the *Hauptschule*, the lowest track of secondary education.

If we view all these factors together, it is little wonder that the Turkish second generation in France enters preparatory schools for higher education at higher rates than elsewhere in Europe. Children start going to school earlier in France, have more hours of face-to-face instruction, and do not undergo educational selection until a fairly advanced age.

Divergent Drop-out Rates

Another important indicator of success is the drop-out rate, that is, the number of children who leave school without a secondary-education diploma. Now we see the reverse picture in terms of success across countries: France, the Netherlands, and Belgium do much worse than Germany and Austria.

In Germany and Austria, only a very small percentage of the Turkish second generation fails to get a *Hauptschule* diploma or another secondary education diploma.⁹

In the Netherlands, the percentage of children who do not receive an equivalent diploma from lower secondary vocational education (called the *Vbo*) is much higher.¹⁰ In France, the situation is even more dramatic.¹¹ The education system in France differs from education systems in the German-speaking countries as well as from those in Belgium and the Netherlands. Until age 15, children in France are not split up, but all attend a *collège* (middle school). A diploma from a *collège* provides access to different types of *lycées* (high schools). If children do not receive a *collège* diploma, they enter a vocational school. Because of the early start and the late selection (see above), most Turkish second-generation children enter into the more prestigious *lycées* so that, more than in any other country, members of the Turkish second generation are in a preparatory track for higher education. However, many Turkish second-generation children drop out, and, as a result, often end up with no diploma at all.¹² In short, once a child enters a *lycée*, the price of failure is higher.

In the Netherlands, a significant group of Turkish second-generation children move into a vocational track at age 12. Their situation resembles that of second-generation Turkish children in Germany who move into vocational education at age 10. The drop-out rate in the Netherlands, however, is much higher. If we compare the situation between the vocational educational tracks in Germany and the Netherlands, two factors in particular explain the gap in drop-out rates: age and the balance between theory and practice.

First, the drop-out rate is especially high in the 16-and-older age group. By age 14 or 15, most of the Turkish second generation in Germany already possess a *Hauptschule* diploma. At age 16, children in the Netherlands still attend school full time. Second, the balance between theoretical models and practical skills is different between the two systems. In the lower vocational education track in the Netherlands, the period of apprenticeship — which is called *stage* and where practical skills are developed — is limited. Half of the classes the children attend consist of general theoretical subjects; the other half are devoted to the vocation for which they are being trained. Children are often opposed to this educational approach.

The Transition to the Labor Market

A significant difference among education systems in certain European countries lies in whether or not they offer a strong, well-established apprenticeship system. In Germany and Austria, most Turkish second-generation pupils enter a dual

track at age 14 and work as an apprentice in a firm three to four days a week. Therefore, the apprenticeship track smoothes the transition to the labor market. In countries with an apprenticeship system, unemployment among the Turkish second generation is much lower than in countries without an apprenticeship system.¹³ Thus, compared to the Netherlands and France, which lack apprenticeship systems, the Turkish second generation in Germany and Austria is better equipped to enter the labor market.¹⁴

The apprenticeship track smoothes the transition in various ways. Some Turkish second generation individuals in Germany and Austria continue to work at the company where they started as an apprentice.¹⁵ Others can at least demonstrate two to three years of work experience to their potential new employers. In France and the Netherlands, the Turkish second generation has to enter the labor market on its own. Discrimination seems to play a more important role in this situation than in Germany or Austria, where the transition to the labor market is formalized through the apprenticeship system.

There are two explanations for the more important role of discrimination in France and the Netherlands. First, there is a major difference for the Turkish second generation in terms of entering the labor market. In Germany and Austria, the Turkish second generation can show a diploma and an employment record as an apprentice; many of the Turkish second generation in France and the Netherlands can show neither a diploma nor any work experience. The decision to employ someone in Germany and Austria is based mainly on individual employment records that potential employees can demonstrate. By contrast, in France and the Netherlands, the judgment is solely based on school qualifications. Research in France and the Netherlands shows that if employers can choose between second-generation youth and native youth with the same qualifications, second-generation youth are not given an equal chance.¹⁶

A second explanation for the difference is that youth unemployment rates in France are much higher than in Germany and Austria. Research shows that discrimination is more widespread when there is tough competition in the labor market. In contrast, employers cannot afford to discriminate when labor markets are tight.

Comparing these countries shows the importance of institutional arrangements in education (starting age, compulsory schooling, number of instructional hours in primary school, and the importance of early or late selection in secondary education). The comparison also demonstrates that the method of transition to

the labor market (especially the apprenticeship system) affects the integration of the second generation. There is also a complex interplay with discrimination.

Concluding Recommendations

It is tempting to compile an ideal educational experience for children of immigrants from the country examples explored in this policy brief. This approach would not do justice to the different (social and economic) historical settings that have shaped the educational systems of each country. Our ambition has to be more modest. Based on the results, we will discuss three sets of options to improve the situation of the children of immigrants in education: (a) early start, (b) late selection and/or second-chance options, and (c) dual tracks.

These options are not specifically targeted at children of immigrants; consequently, they will not lead to the stigmatization of immigrant groups, nor will they lead to resentment among the native population.

A. Offer an Early Start in the Educational System to Promote Language Acquisition

While lowering the compulsory schooling age would be a major (and difficult) policy shift, effective alternatives to this have been developed in many countries. For instance, some have established preschools that focus on native-language acquisition. Crucial to this recommendation is the design of programs and policies. Such programs are only effective if the methods used are compatible with those employed in primary school; ideally, preschool should be part of primary school.

B. Create Second Chances to Help Students Overcome Cultural Disadvantages

Children of immigrants usually start school at a linguistic disadvantage. It takes some time to overcome this disadvantage, and so children in systems with early selection fare worse than they otherwise would. A number of alternative models to later selection do not impose fundamental structural change on school systems. The general rule in all alternative models is to ensure children have a second chance.

Examples of alternative models include:

- *Top-class primary school.* Motivated children who are not yet ready to be promoted can be offered an extra year of primary school to make it possible for

them to pass the entrance exam to a more prestigious track. The results of such an approach have proved promising.

- *Intermediary classes in secondary education.* In so-called intermediary classes, children remain together for one or two extra years after primary school without going through a selection process. Research shows that many children of immigrants were able to continue at a higher level after one or two intermediary years.

- *Contiguous learning routes.* Research on successful children of immigrants shows that many of them took a longer road to success. They started low and gained access to higher education step by step. This has also been the traditional path of social mobility for working-class native children. The way the vocational column is organized is essential in this respect: It should be easy to move from lower to middle to higher vocational education.

C. Apprenticeships (Dual Tracks) Help Prevent Drop Outs and Smooth the Transition to the Labor Market

The apprenticeship system stems from a long tradition of involving companies in the education of young people. This system seems to smooth the transition to the labor market, especially for groups that have difficulties entering it. The apprenticeship system is potentially a strong weapon against youth unemployment and high drop-out rates. For a substantial group of children of immigrants with learning difficulties, an apprenticeship is a good alternative to full-time school.

Two factors seem essential in this regard. First, there must be excellent cooperation with firms providing trainee posts. Second, there must be an early start to the dual track (for example, at age 14, as in Germany and Austria). Furthermore, countries without a strong apprenticeship track might still benefit from adapting some of these policies. In fact, some countries without an apprenticeship system have recently developed programs that draw elements from the apprenticeship system; for example, they put pupils to work in firms earlier and for longer time periods.

ENDNOTES

1. M. Crul and H. Vermeulen, "The Second Generation in Europe. Introduction," *International Migration Review* 37, no.4 (2003): 965-986.
2. Crul and Vermeulen, "The Second Generation in Europe" (see n.1); Heckmann et al., "Effectiveness of National Integration Strategies towards Second Generation Migrant Youth in a Comparative European Perspective," Final Report to the European Commission (Bamberg:EfSM, 2001).
3. See also R. Süßmuth, "The Urgent Need for Teaching Intercultural Skills – Challenge and Impacts of a Globalizing World on Education," Paper for Globalization and Learning Conference in Stockholm, March 16-19, 2005: 9.
4. Crul and Vermeulen, "The Second Generation in Europe" (see n.1). For further information on the TIES project, see <http://www.imiscoe.org/ties/>.
5. S. Özüekren and R. Van Kempen, eds., *Turks in European Cities: Housing and Urban Segregation*, Research in Migration and Ethnic Relations (Leicestershire, UK: European Research Centre, 1997), 5.
6. M. Crul and J. Doomernik, "The Turkish and the Moroccan second generation in the Netherlands: Divergent Trends between and Polarization within the Two Groups," *International Migration Review* 37, no.4 (2003): 1039-1065; B. Herzog-Punzensberger, "Ethnic Segmentation in School and Labor Market – 40 Year Legacy of Austrian 'Guest worker' Policy," *International Migration Review* 37, no.4 (2003): 1120-1144; P. Simon, "France and the Unknown Second Generation: Preliminary Results on Social Mobility," *International Migration Review* 37, no.4 (2003): 1091-1119; Timmerman et al., "The Second Generation in Belgium," *International Migration Review* 37, no.4 (2003); S. Worbs, "The Second Generation in Germany: Between School and Labor Market," *International Migration Review* 37, no.4 (2003): 1011-1038.
7. See note 6 above.
8. Crul and Vermeulen, "The Second Generation in Europe" (see n.1).
9. Herzog-Punzensberger, "Ethnic Segmentation in School and Labor Market" (see n.6); Worbs, "The Second Generation in Germany" (see n.6).
10. Crul and Doomernik, "The Turkish and the Moroccan second generation in the Netherlands" (see n.6).
11. Simon, "France and the Unknown Second Generation" (see n.6).

12. Simon, "France and the Unknown Second Generation" (see n.6).

13. The fact that the apprenticeship systems in Germany and Austria give second-generation Turkish students better opportunities than those afforded to second-generation Turkish students in the Netherlands and France should not imply that the apprenticeship system works perfectly. There is mounting evidence that Turkish youth profit less from the apprenticeship system than native-born youth in Germany and Austria. It is more difficult for them to gain a good apprenticeship position with good prospects for future work, and they are more likely to drop out of the dual track (Worbs, "The Second Generation in Germany" (see n.6), 1029; S. von Below, *Schulische Bildung, berufliche Ausbildung und Erwerbstätigkeit junger Migranten*, Ergebnissen des Integrations surveys des BiB, Heft 105b (Wiesbaden: BiB, 2003), 44-5.

14. Crul and Vermeulen, "The Second Generation in Europe" (see n.1).

15. A. Böcker and D. Thränhardt, "Is het Duitse integratiebeleid succesvoller, en zo ja, waarom?" ["Is the German integration policy more successful, and if yes, why?"] *Migrantenstudies* 19, no. 1 (2003): 42..

16. Crul and Doornik, "The Turkish and the Moroccan second generation in the Netherlands," (see n. 6), 1057; Simon, "France and the Unknown Second Generation," (see n. 6), 1111-1112.

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