THE SECOND GENERATION IN EUROPE

ABSTRACT

The second generation in Europe is coming of age. The first group is making the transition to the labour market. This gives us, for the first time, the opportunity to compare the position of the second generation across Europe. If we look at one group – children of Turkish immigrants – in five European countries, we see very different outcomes. This puts the spotlight on the importance of the integration context.

MAURICE CRUL

Dr. Maurice Crul is a senior researcher at the Institute for Migration and Ethnic Studies (IMES) of the University of Amsterdam and is the international coordinator of the Integration of the European Second Generation (TIES) project (www.tiesproject.eu).

The public debate about the second generation in Europe has taken a dramatic shift in the last five years. The United Kingdom was profoundly shocked that British-born second generation youth of Pakistani descent were involved in terror acts in the United Kingdom. The riots in the banlieues in France, involving Algerian and Moroccan second generation youth, pitched the cherished Republican model into deep crisis. In the Netherlands, arguments about the failure of the country's multicultural society have cited the relatively high number of children of immigrants who drop out of school and the high crime-rate within the Moroccan second generation. In Germany, similar concerns about the Turkish second generation have triggered a debate about the existence of a parallel *Gesellschaft*, composed of almost 2 million Turks living in a separate world detached from the wider German society.

This general image in the media obscures the fact that the majority of the second generation children have successfully completed education and holds a steady position in the labour market. Compared with their parents who did not have the opportunity to study, they make a spectacular step up the social mobility ladder. This general image also obscures the huge differences in the position of the second generation in Europe. The different integration contexts in European countries shape very different outcomes for the second generation.

The second generation 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 school children; in Berlin's Kreuzberg neighbourhood, the European capital of the Turkish community, some primary schools almost only have pupils of Turkish descent. In London, English is a second language for a third of all schoolchildren. The performance of these children generally lags behind that of children of non-immigrants in all school-success indicators: they drop out at higher rates, repeat grades more frequently, and are concentrated in the least-challenging educational tracks.

The educational gap between the second generation and children of native-born parents is of great concern to policy-makers and politicians in local and national governments. There is an ongoing debate about whether the "new second generation" – mostly children born to migrant guest workers who arrived in Europe in the 1960s and 1970s – is able to move up the educational ladder or instead form a new underclass in Europe's largest cities. While such concerns are often exaggerated for political purposes, there can be no 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 the children of families from former British colonies in South Asia and the Caribbean. The performance of children of refugees further demonstrates the importance of socioeconomic 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 often overlay differences among immigrant groups. The largely American theoretical debate about the integration of the second generation seems to have had a persistent blind spot for the importance of the national context in which the second generation is

trying to move forward. In the American debate on the second generation, the emphasis has been on comparing different ethnic groups in the same national context. North American researchers, as Jeffrey Reitz argues, have only recently started to pay more attention to the importance of the national context in which immigrants and their children live and work

In 2005 a large international project, The Integration of the European Second Generation (TIES), was launched; since then, ten thousand respondents have been interviewed in eight countries. The same groups (second generation Turks, Moroccans and ex-Yugoslavians) with the same starting position (all born in Europe) are compared as they integrate in eight different countries. This gives us a unique opportunity to look at the importance of the national integration context. Different practices in different countries provide a view of what works. The European Union Member States can be seen as a natural laboratory for identifying effective practices.

The following analysis offers a closer look at one of these groups, the children of Turkish immigrants, and examines their experiences in five countries where the TIES data set has already been completed: Austria, France, Germany, the Netherlands and Switzerland.

The case of the Turkish second generation

Turkish migrants and their children are the largest immigrant group in Europe, numbering up to 4 million, and they reside in a great number of 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 labour migration with Turkey. The peak of that migration was reached between 1971 and 1973, when more than 500,000 Turkish workers came to work in Western Europe. German industry recruited 90% of them.

European industry was in need of low-skilled labour at the time, and indeed the majority of these first generation Turkish "guest workers" was recruited from the lowest socioeconomic strata in their home countries and had very little education. In the rural areas where most of them grew up, educational opportunities were limited to the primary school level. Generally speaking, first generation men had finished primary school only and most women had just a few years of schooling. The first generation made few advances in the European labour market – in fact, the contrary occurred.

Most second generation Turkish children – those born in the country of immigration or (more broadly) those who arrived before primary school – grew up in unfavourable circumstances. Family income was often very low by European standards, and most families lived in substandard and cramped accommodations. In many neighbourhood schools, children from a mix of migrant backgrounds were in the majority.

The educational positions of the Turkish second generation in the five countries in the TIES project show startling differences. Whereas in France half of the second generation Turks enter into tertiary education, in the neighbouring countries – Germany, Austria and Switzerland – around 10% or less manage to enter university. The Netherlands is positioned somewhere in the middle, with 27% of the Turkish second generation in higher education.

The results show that national contexts vary widely in the types of opportunities available to the Turkish second generation. The differences in outcomes can be related to the differences in school systems in the five countries. The success of the French system can largely be explained by the open educational system in France. School starts very early at age two or three. The second generation Turkish children start to learn French as a second language in an educational setting from a very early age. Children go through a comprehensive school system where they are only selected at the age of fifteen. That gives children thirteen years of schooling to make up their initial disadvantaged starting position. In contrast, second generation Turkish children in Austria and Germany only start attending school at age six. By that time they are fluent in Turkish but lag behind in German considerably. On top of that they only go to school half days. When they are selected for the different school streams at age ten (at the end of primary school), it should come as no surprise that most of them go to lower vocational education. In Austria, Germany and Switzerland, about three-quarters of the second generation Turkish children end up in the vocational column. The Netherlands, with a starting age of four and selection age at twelve, is an in-between case. But another feature of the Dutch educational system also explains the better performance than in the three countries east of the Netherlands. In the Netherlands almost half of the second generation Turkish students in higher education have taken what is called *the long route* to higher education. They have started out in lower vocational education, moved on to middle vocational education and after that entered higher education. This route takes an additional three years but in the end gets you into higher education. This route is almost non-existent in the neighbouring countries.

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Although one might now be tempted to conclude that France and, to a lesser extent, the Netherlands provide the best institutional contexts for children of immigrants, that is not the whole story. Access to higher education is only one indicator. Another important indicator is early school leaving. Early school leaving in Europe is defined as leaving school with no secondary diploma or only a lower secondary vocational education diploma. Early school leaving is, with a quarter of the Turkish second generation in this category, especially high in the Netherlands. Switzerland, Austria and Germany show the best results. France's results are somewhere in between. The more comprehensive schools in France and the Netherlands aim high, but as a result more second generation Turkish students drop out. Thus they leave school at age 16 without any valuable qualifications for the labour market. In Austria, Germany and Switzerland second generation Turks in the vocational track already start to work at age fourteen and go to school part time. This usually prevents them from dropping out before they finish their training as skilled workers. It also helps to facilitate the transition to the labour market. We can see this in the better labour market outcomes in Austria, Germany and Switzerland. The transition to the labour market is most problematic in France, where almost half become unemployed upon completing their schooling. The three neighbouring countries east of France all score considerably higher. In the long run, they also perform (especially Switzerland with only 7% in unemployment or disabled schemes) better than France (13%) and the Netherlands (14%) in integrating the second generation Turkish youth in the labour market.

The decision to employ someone in Germany, Switzerland and Austria is based to a large extent on individual employment records, through their apprentices' experiences. By contrast, in France and the Netherlands, judgment is based on (the lack of) school qualifications. Research in France and the Netherlands shows that if employers can choose between immigrant youth and native youth with the same qualifications, immigrant youngsters are not given an equal chance.

Comparing the five countries shows the importance of institutional educational and labour market settings, such as the age at which formal schooling begins and the number of instructional hours, and of early or late selection in secondary education. Also significant is the method of transition to the labour market. It is tempting to compile an ideal educational experience for children of immigrants from the country examples explored here. Doing so would not do justice to the different social, economic and historical contexts that have shaped the educational systems of each of these countries.

However, there are a few general lessons to be learned. One would be to lower the compulsory schooling age as a way to promote language acquisition at an early age and extend the learning period before selection. A second would be to create long routes or "second chances" to help students overcome initial disadvantages. Finally, apprentice-type programs, or programs that give students the chance to work with companies for a long period of time, could help smooth the transition into the labour market.

The comparison shows that we need to focus more on why educational systems produce unfavourable outcomes. The cost of adjusting school systems – that block upward mobility – should be put against the societal costs of children of immigrants who do not finish their schooling, become long-term unemployed or worse.

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Future scenarios

Different educational and labour market outcomes will have an important impact on how the Turkish communities will be shaped in the future in these five countries. In France and the Netherlands, an upcoming elite of second generation Turkish youth with higher education degrees are moving into the middle or upper classes. They often marry highly educated second generation partners and together become part of the affluent city dwellers in well-to-do residential districts. Conversely, in France and the Netherlands, early school leavers and their families often join the ranks of the long-term unemployed and live close to, or below, the poverty line. The scenario in Germany, Austria and Switzerland is much less polarized. The second generation Turks slowly but steadily move up to the position of skilled workers. An elite is almost absent. Which of the two scenarios in the end will prove to be more successful is still an open question.