

## European comparative study provides evidence that national context does matter in integration outcomes

The European ‘second generation’ – children born of immigrant parentage – constitutes a growing and increasingly vocal segment of the metropolitan youth. The TIES project, involving survey research in 15 cities across 8 European countries, paints a vivid picture of how the children of immigrants from Turkey, Morocco and former Yugoslavia are progressing in education, labour, social relations, religion and identity formation. Its findings and cross-national comparisons are demographically compelling and at times revelational.

### Immigration and the political agenda

Public debate in much of Europe has shifted against immigrants and their children since the late 2000s. With an extra push from the financial crisis, the so-called ‘threat of Islam’ has been raised as a key political issue by one populist party after another. Populist politicians have normalised a bold anti-immigrant discourse that links unemployment, crime and religious extremism with immigrants and their children.

The most extreme expression of anti-immigrant anxiety came in Norway in 2011. A right-wing zealot took the lives of 77 people,

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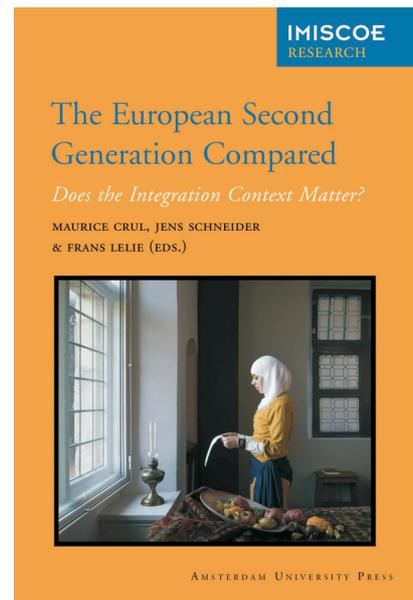
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mostly teenagers attending a Labour Party youth camp, claiming that he wanted to root out the next generation of social democrats and their lax policies on immigration.

What are the facts about today’s young adults from immigrant families in the democratic states of Western Europe? Are media voices correct when they assert that major segments of immigrant communities are failing to integrate and therefore are a danger to democratic societies?

According to classic assimilation theory, ethnic, cultural and social distinctions should become less relevant over time, as immigrant ethnic groups become more like the majority in their new-found home. The majority in the receiving society, in turn, is said to evolve as it absorbs new groups. But do all immigrants and their children ‘assimilate’? Or do some grow to resent the host society, a sign that multiculturalism has failed?

In theory, the children of immigrants should have the same life chances as the children of native-born parents. Thus, the achievements of the young adult children



### The European Second Generation Compared: Does the Integration Context Matter?

*Maurice Crul, Jens Schneider and Frans Lelie (eds)*

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of immigrants in areas like education and labour force participation should provide a robust measure of group integration on the whole. The children born to Europe’s first labour migrants are now young adults. They are finishing their educational careers and entering the labour market in large numbers. The time is then ripe for a first real assessment of second-generation integration.

This TIES project has conducted such an assessment. The findings are presented in the recently published volume *The European Second Generation Compared*. The authors investigate the integration of the second generation in crucial domains such as education, labour market, social relations, religion and identity formation. The data they use is from the first-ever international comparative survey on the second generation in Europe.

TIES is the largest project of its kind in Europe. More than 30 researchers worked on the collected data to learn how the young adult children born to immigrants are faring in fifteen cities across eight European countries. This so-called 'second generation' pursued their entire education in Europe and were between 18 and 35 years of age at the time of the survey. This 'European second generation' is made up of the children of immigrants from Turkey, Morocco and the former Yugoslavia. Alongside this second generation, a comparison group was surveyed made up of respondents whose parents were born in the survey country.

## Aims

The first ambition of the TIES project was to provide a systematic cross-national comparison of the second generation in Europe. Most existing comparative European research on integration has focused on immigrants as a whole. Studying specific ethnic groups with the same starting position facilitates cross-national comparison. The fact that we can compare the same ethnic group with the same starting position in different countries gives us the opportunity to study the *receiving context* in integration processes.

The TIES project analysed the effects of specific city and national contexts in promoting or hampering integration. Country teams gathered information on national

## Key Findings

- **Most of the second generation are in a stable labour market position. Some have taken a spectacular step on the social ladder in just one generation.**
- **Context matters. Policies and institutions in receiving countries explain the large differences in integration success.**
- **Policies to help families combine paid work with child care stimulate emancipation of second-generation women.**
- **The second generation identifies strongly with the city they live in. Claiming a national identity is more difficult.**
- **Religion forms a key difference between the young people of immigrant parentage and adolescents of native descent. Very few among the second generation are non-believers.**
- **Most second-generation Muslim adolescents adhere to a modern form of Islam in which the separation of state and religion is the main pillar.**

and local institutional arrangements regarding schools and the labour market, citizenship policies and anti-discrimination measures.

*The European Second Generation Compared* gives an overview of the main results of the TIES survey for each topic: education, labour market, family formation, identity and religion. Throughout the volume the focus is on second-generation Turks, in particular. This group is included in seven of the European countries surveyed, thus offering the most generalisability for the sake of cross-country comparison. With a population exceeding four million, people of Turkish descent are the largest migrant group in Europe. The analysis of their position is the backbone of the book.

The project's international comparative framework demands a new theoretical perspective in which the national and local integration context takes centre stage. The 'integration context theory' introduced in the book fills this gap. In short, contextual differences must take into account structural aspects of institutional arrangements, such as the integrative nature of education systems, how the transition to the labour market manifests, how welfare arrangements around paid work and

care work are organised, legal frameworks and housing.

## Outcomes

In terms of immigrant 'success stories', is the second generation doing well or poorly? Both conclusions could be defended with the data at hand. A considerable second-generation group occupies a rather marginal position in society. Its members are not active in the labour market, being unemployed or stuck in unskilled jobs. Nor do they show much social mobility relative to their parents.

In Germany, this demographic represents about a third of the second generation with low-educated parents. This poor example of inte-

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gration – or lack thereof – has become somewhat of a cliché that is often reiterated in the media and populist politics.

However, in all eight countries, between half to two-thirds of the second generation are in fact stable members of the lower to upper middle class. This group has moved considerably higher on the social ladder than their parents. Some have taken a spectacular step in just one generation. This positive – and, in fact, predominant – picture gets considerably less attention on the evening news.

With its findings, the TIES project starts to answer the more important question, the *why* of integration success. The TIES results demonstrate that context matters in integration. Institutional arrangements in the ‘receiving society’ actually create the very capacity of an immigrant group to find a productive place and position. At the same time, the results show that no one particular integration context in Europe can be upheld as the most favourable. Across and within the thematic fields covered, some countries show more favourable results than others.

There are a number of institutional arrangements that could, in sum, merit being labelled ‘good practice’. An early start in formal education and late selection between vocational and academic tracks prove crucial for school suc-

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## What Experts Have Said

*‘Immigration scholars have waited years for a rigorous international comparison that would enable systematic thinking about how local and national contexts impact integration processes. We finally have it. The field will never be the same.’*

Richard Alba, Co-Author of *Remaking the American Mainstream*

*‘This book is both theoretically and empirically important, as no other work has been able to compare these second generation groups along key indices of integration in so many European countries.’*

Miri Song, Professor of Sociology, University of Kent

*‘A new standard in migration studies has been set. The much-anticipated TIES project’s thoughtful design, robust methods and compelling findings are presented in this integrated set of chapters – they do not disappoint.’*

Steven Vertovec, Director, Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity

cess. An inclusive apprenticeship system smoothens young adults’ passage to working life. Alternative routes through vocational schools enable children to reach higher education at later ages, even those from more disadvantaged starting positions. Welfare-state arrangements that allow women to combine paid work with family care stimulate labour market participation among a group that has traditionally refrained from entering the workforce.

Yet the TIES data also suggest that a distinct form of labour market segmentation is emerging: second-generation youths with higher education diplomas are experiencing difficulty entering professional jobs. In other words, a ‘glass ceiling’ for children of immigrants may be emerging.

For over 25 years, a main explanatory factor for the low socio-economic status of certain groups of immigrants and their children was the low socio-economic background of their parents and their family’s supposed ‘distance from education’ (this is referred to in German as *Bildungsferne*). The TIES comparison across countries, however, shows radically different educational outcomes even for

children whose parents share the same socio-economic characteristics and display the same attitudes towards school and education. This contrast evinces the relevance of the integration *context* in explaining differences in societal participation.

In particular, institutional arrangements in education and the labour market have huge impact. This is no surprise, since young people spend between thirteen and twenty years in education. In some European countries, such as Sweden and France, differences in the way schools and labour markets select diminish differences based on group and parental characteristics; but they increase them in Germany and Austria.

Lower-class children of native-born parentage are often affected by this same ‘context dependency’ logic. However, the TIES findings point to a ‘multiplier effect’. Where school and labour market



## About the Authors

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For more information on the TIES project and publications, visit [www.tiesproject.eu](http://www.tiesproject.eu)

factors work against lower-class children of native-born parentage, they are even more damaging for children of immigrants. On the flipside, when systems provide extra opportunities, the second generation profits even more from the facilities than children of native-born parentage.

In terms of social relations and identity, the integration context has various impacts. In general, context has relatively little influence on the more private indicators (such as partner choice) and group-based indicators ('ethno-national' feelings of belonging). Context matters more in public domains, such as inter-ethnic relations and feelings of national belonging.

Populist parties across Europe have argued that young Muslims place religious beliefs above everything else – and that they have little attachment to the society and nation they were born into and live in. The TIES results prove the contrary. Only a minority feels weakly connected to the nation-state and claims religious authority above political authority.

Populists and anti-Islamists hold multiculturalism responsible for allowing an activist fundamen-

talist Islam to flourish in Europe. However, the group advocating 'political' Islam is actually smallest in Sweden, the country with the most prominent multicultural policies and welfare-state provisions. By contrast, Germany is the country where the greatest proportion of respondents advocated some sort of 'political' Islam. This is also one of the countries with the least developed multicultural policies and the least equality in state provisions for mosques and teaching Islam at school. 'Political' Islam thus seems to shrink in a tolerant 'multiculturalist' environment.

### Links to Policy

The evidence of the TIES survey is highly relevant for Europe's current debates on integration. First, the national figures provide a gauge to assess countries' performance. They show countries where they score well and where they lag behind. This cross-national comparison helps policymakers to answer questions like, 'Are certain integration problems inherent to particular group characteristics?' and 'Could different policies (at least partly) make a difference?'

Second, with one of the biggest social engineering projects in history under way – the building of the European Union – successful integration policies are more pertinent now than ever before. So far, the European Union has concentrated on creating a common migration policy. *Integration poli-*

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cies have remained the remit of national and local governments.

The Union, however, has an example to set. Pressure to adopt good integration practices will continue to grow in a globalised world, in which migration is a permanent, omnipresent phenomenon. Progress depends on seeing our past failures for what they are and understanding the urgency of implementing best practices.

## About IMISCOE

The IMISCOE Research Network unites researchers from some 30 institutes specialising in studies of international migration, integration and social cohesion in Europe. What began in 2004 as a Network of Excellence sponsored by the Sixth Framework Programme of the European Commission became, as of April 2009, an independent self-funding endeavour. IMISCOE promotes integrated, multidisciplinary and globally comparative research led by scholars from various branches of the economic and social sciences, the humanities and law. The network furthers existing studies and pioneers new scholarship on migration and migrant integration. Encouraging innovative lines of inquiry key to European policymaking and governance is also a priority. [www.imiscoe.org](http://www.imiscoe.org)