

The socioeconomic position of women of African, Middle Eastern, Latin American and Asian descent living in the European Union ¹

ABSTRACT

This study, commissioned by the European Parliament's Policy Department for Citizens' Rights and Constitutional Affairs at the request of the FEMM Committee, provides an overview of the social situation and level of integration of second- and third-generation migrant women. This topic is analysed using specific indicators, namely, residential conditions, family patterns, labour-market integration, and health outcomes.

Findings

Integration of second- and third-generation migrant women is a crucial topic of migration studies and policies. However, comparable quantitative data covering all European Union MSs on women (and men) from second-generation migrants is not systematically available by ethnic groups and countries. Available information from international studies and scientific literature on the living conditions and degree of integration of this group does not cover the conditions of all women (and men) from second generations in all EU-27 countries by different origins.

However, the available information points to some interesting issues. Second-generation migrant women and men experience disadvantages in education, employment, housing and health. They live in urban areas at risk of geographical ethnic segregation and are more likely to marry within their ethnic groups and follow their ethnic traditions, especially if they are from specific origins (African and Asian) or practise a particular religion (Islam). These disadvantages are mostly connected to explicit and implicit discrimination by the hosting societies at individual and institutional levels, and to gender and ethnic stereotypes.

The specific indicators for the social situation and level of integration of second- and third-generation migrant women used in this study are: education achievements and perspectives of the target population; the geographical polarisation and segregation of these women in both urban and rural contexts; family and marital patterns; labour-market integration and work-life balance strategies; the general conditions of health of the target population; and the levels and habits of access to reproductive rights. The study also discusses definitions of integration and transnationalism in the available literature and proposes a definition of the second and third generations of immigration.

¹ Full study in English: [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2021/696916/IPOL_STU\(2021\)696916_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2021/696916/IPOL_STU(2021)696916_EN.pdf)



Despite the overall lack of consistent and updated data covering all 27 EU MSs, some relevant results emerge. First, educational outcomes of children with a migrant background in the EU are not as good as natives' outcomes. Gender differences in education in EU for the whole population of students are well known. They clearly emerge in pupils' achievements in reading (girls at an advantage) and mathematics (boys obtaining better results). Early school leaving is more frequent among boys than girls. Gender gaps in the educational performance of second-generation minorities are often wider than those recorded in the majority population of the same age group and educational level. Highly selective education systems and poor intercultural sensitivity among school personnel have a negative impact on educational outcomes of ethnic minorities.

Recommendations

To address the lack of specific statistical information the European Parliament and the Council should call on the MSs to produce comparable and reliable data. Parliament should call on the Commission and Eurostat to help national statistical authorities provide data protection protocols for individual sex-disaggregated data on ethnicity. Resistance against data collection on ethnic minorities by national and local stakeholders should be countered with initiatives to strengthen the protection and integration of ethnic minorities. Such initiatives could result in a clearer definition of migration policy of the EU and strengthening of the protection of ethnic minorities in the MSs.

Factors influencing the educational achievements at the intersection of gender and ethnicity should be addressed concurrently in order to obtain improvements. Such factors are: gender stereotypes about children including second-generation girls; contrasting forms of implicit and explicit discrimination that may prevent second-generation children from obtaining good achievements; the need to promote multiculturalism and cultural exchanges among pupils; and the need to reduce selectivity in educational systems (between vocational and academic paths), as it is discouraging minority ethnic groups from educational achievements.

Parliament and the Council should call on the MSs to take action to adopt educational models that effectively promote integration of minority ethnic groups, including second-generation migrants. The Erasmus + Programme is a good opportunity for stakeholders in the MSs (including schools and individual citizens) to exchange good practices on multiculturalism in education and to address different forms of discrimination.

Parliament could call on the Commission to closely monitor the implementation of the Rights and Values Programme, the European Social Fund + (ESF +) , and the Next Generation EU Fund. Parliament could also call on the Commission, the Council and the MSs to undertake more initiatives towards coordination of educational policies, awareness-raising and capacity-building for school personnel in order to promote integration of ethnic minorities with a simultaneous commitment to gender equality.

The segregation of second-generation migrants can be counteracted by purpose-designed housing policies implicitly introducing indirect forms of price control over housing rental fees. Social housing should favour a multi-ethnic social context with majority and minority ethnic groups proportionally represented. Parliament could also call on the Commission to closely monitor actions for social housing at regional level within the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) with a view to working against spatial segregation.

The EU framework for supporting work-life balance should be carefully tailored to the needs of families of second-generation migrants. Women from this group - who already have an extremely uncertain position on the labour market - are at a higher risk of losing their jobs when they have children. Parliament should therefore urge the MSs to fully implement the work-life balance policies. This should include early childhood education and care (ECEC). This is not only necessary for work-life balance but also for supporting a successful educational path for the children of first-, second- and third-generation migrants. The Commission should promote effective policies including for ECEC that take into account both ethnicity and gender equality.

The EU institutions, in particular the Commission, should support the adoption of effective measures to promote labour market participation of second-generation migrant women through the monitoring of the European Semester process and the implementation of ESF+. Parliament could urge the MSs to implement appropriate measures and initiatives.

Coordinated measures to address the COVID-19 pandemic have proven that coordination in health policies is crucial for the wellbeing of all populations living in the EU. Parliament could urge the Council and the MSs to enhance cooperation in health policy, particularly in the area of preventive health, e.g. as regards cardiovascular diseases and diabetes. These initiatives should include all the resident populations and could be supported by the European Union for Health (EU4Health) Fund. Initiatives to enhance the capacity of health care personnel to provide tailored assistance to ethnic minorities – in particular ethnic minority women – could be encouraged within the existing financial instruments (ESF +).

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