

#### Contributor

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#### In summary:

1. Governments in all seven countries need to **improve monitoring discrimination by employers** through field experiments and annual surveys.
2. Anti-discrimination **policy framework needs to be made more visible to immigrant youth** together with increasing the awareness about their rights.
3. EU should encourage **benchmarking and best practice exchange** among national agents in the field of labour market discrimination with **special focus on second generation young immigrants**.



**EUMARGINS**  
On the Margins of the European Community

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## Is discrimination an issue?

### Young immigrants in labour market in seven European countries

Resume: *EUMARGIN's third policy brief looks at discrimination as a factor of exclusion of young adult immigrants in labour markets in seven European countries: Estonia, Spain, France, Italy, Sweden, United Kingdom and Norway. Several observations emerge from the analysis. **First**, unemployment rates are high for young people in all seven countries, however, for immigrant youth, they are even higher. Unemployment is especially high for so called visible minorities such as Magrebian in France; Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi in Britain; Sub-Saharan Africans in Spain and Italy; and non-European minorities in Sweden and Norway. **Second**, although the situation improves for second-generation immigrant youth, their labour market access still lags behind of that of nationals of given country. Second generation immigrant youth also fare worse in competition for higher-level occupational positions. However, in some countries, namely UK and Sweden, once in the market, second generation immigrants' occupational attainment more often than not is in par with nationals. **Third**, while there may be various sources of ethnic discrepancies in labour market for first generation immigrants such as low portability of human capital (or as is the case for language for most countries) and lack of social networks. However, it is more difficult to explain why second generation immigrant youth still face these disadvantages. Through analysing second generation immigrant youth's performance in the labour market we thus approach the question whether there is employer discrimination on the grounds of ethnic origin in countries under study.*

*Based on these arguments a set of general recommendations can be made. **First**, governments in all seven countries need to improve monitoring discrimination by employers through field experiments and annual surveys. **Second**, anti-discrimination policy framework that is already in place needs to be made more visible to immigrant youth together with increasing the awareness about their rights. **And last but not least**, EU should encourage benchmarking and best practice exchange among national agents in the field of labour market discrimination with special focus on second generation young immigrants.*

## Introduction

For a young person with immigrant background, either first or second generation, access to education and labour market are the most important arenas in which young adults have to establish themselves as active social actors in society. Similarly, for the state, young immigrants' participation in labour market is one of the most important indicators of successes or failures of country's integration policy. For EU Member States, effective integration of immigrants into the labour market constitutes an important contribution to reaching the Lisbon targets for jobs and growth. However, in many European countries young people with immigrant background tend to have higher unemployment rates and are more likely to be employed in jobs of lower quality and pay compared to the nationals. Even more, in majority of countries that were analysed for this brief (with the exception of Italy and UK) immigrant youth face a double disadvantage: the European youth unemployment rate is more than double that of the overall working-age population and the unemployment rate for immigrant youth is significantly higher again.

Although the situation improves for second-generation immigrant youth their job-access rates are still below that of nationals of given country. These disadvantages have been explained by several factors such as lower educational attainment of young immigrants, lack of human and social capital (namely language skills and citizenship of host country, knowledge of host country labour market etc), socio-economic background and country of origin, social context and ethnic segregation. These factors differ to very large extent

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among different immigrant groups as well as different national context. This diversity in explanatory factors and in the national contexts makes the comparative analysis of labour market integration a rather challenging task. It is thus not the aim of this policy brief to present comprehensive comparative analysis of labour market exclusion and inclusion but rather to look at ethnic penalties in labour market, especially inequalities of opportunity caused by discrimination.

The aim of EUMARGINS project's fieldwork research, among other objectives, is to identify and assess the degree to which young adult immigrants in their attempts to access the labour market have experienced discrimination of some sort. This policy brief aims to supplement fieldwork data with providing a targeted discussion on the discrimination

of young adult immigrants' in labour market relying on EUMARGINS national context reports and national and transnational comparative surveys. Additionally, the brief looks at national policies of EUMAGINS's countries directed at fighting against this discrimination. The author recognises that labour market challenges differ between countries based on the differences in immigration history and composition of immigrant population in these countries. These differences make the presentation of comparative analysis and consequent policy recommendations a complicated task and it is not the aim of this brief to delve into these tasks. It rather aims at highlighting the differences and commonalities that young adult immigrants face in these different countries and if possible refer to best practice cases in fighting labour market discrimination.

## Difficulties of transnational comparative analysis

Comparison of these seven countries is a difficult task as there are important differences between the labour market organisation and welfare state type. For example, in Southern European countries of Italy and Spain there are higher levels of illegal and undocumented immigration while again in Sweden large bulk of recent immigrants are quota refugees. Estonia stands out from the group with its rather large but unique composition of immigrant population where people categorised as immigrants by the state (Soviet time settlers) resist this categorization. Additionally, differently from all other countries under study, there are no visible minorities among immigrants in Estonia.

When it comes to labour market organisation, there is evidence that in Italy and Spain migrant inclusion into labour market occurs to a far greater extent in the informal sector than in Northern and Western European countries. Integration into labour market in Italy and Spain appears to take place in much faster phase due to the fact that large amount of illegal and undocumented immigrants are labour migrants pulled into country by such sectors of booming economy as agriculture, tourism, construction and domestic services. However, as will be discussed below, these sectors are most vulnerable to cyclical nature of the market economy and thus put young immigrants at most vulnerable situations in these labour markets.

For the purpose of targeted discussion, a definition of a young person with immigrant background is given as following: a person between the ages of 15-25 who is a first generation or second generation immigrant, the latter meaning those born in receiving countries, but with parents born in country of origin. The author recognised the difficulty in conducting a meaningful comparative analysis of groups of people so diverse such as young immigrants in different European countries.

However, based on the survey data presented in this brief, it can be argued that all these diverse groups share one common trait when it comes to labour market participation – they have experienced discrimination based on their immigrant background which makes them either ethnically, racially, linguistically or religiously different from majority population. Thus, although their country of origin, their socio-economic background, history of migration, educational attainments and many other social characteristics differ, they have one thing in common – they have had experience with ethnic, racial or linguistic discrimination when looking for work or being at work.

## Employment and unemployment of immigrant youth

In terms of employment rate, countries in our comparison can be divided into two groups. First group consist of so called “new immigration countries” of southern Europe Spain and Italy (and exceptionally also Estonia) where immigrant youth has higher employment rate compared to nationals. These positive figures can be explained by the nature of immigration to these countries – majority of immigrants enter the country as labour migrants. In Estonia, although immigrant youth is mostly already second-generation, their higher employment rate is caused by employment in booming sectors such as construction. In contrast, in second group of so called “old immigration countries” of France, Sweden, UK and Norway the employment rate of immigrant youth is significantly lower compared to nationals of these countries. In Sweden the difference is as high as 11.6

percentage points (see Table 1). Lower employment rates of immigrant youth together with high unemployment indicates exclusion of immigrant youth from labour market in these countries.

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Table 1: Youth employment and unemployment rate of nationals and foreigners in seven European countries (age group 15-24), 2008<sup>1</sup>

| Country | Employment nationals | Employment foreigners | Unemployment nationals | Unemployment foreigners |
|---------|----------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|
| Estonia | 35.8                 | 41.2                  | 12.1*                  | 11.1*                   |
| Spain   | 34.8                 | 42.1                  | 23.8                   | 27.8                    |
| France  | 32.1                 | 29.2                  | 18.1                   | 24.4                    |
| Italy   | 23.5                 | 35.8                  | 21.8                   | 16.3                    |
| Sweden  | 42.6                 | 31.0                  | 19.8                   | 32.7                    |
| UK      | 53.0                 | 46.5                  | 14.9                   | 15.6                    |
| Norway  | 57.5                 | 52.1                  | 7.5                    | –                       |

Source: Eurostat; \*Estonian National Statistics

Nevertheless, unemployment figures show strong evidence of economic exclusion in almost all seven countries. In 2008, in almost all countries with the exception of Italy and Estonia<sup>2</sup>, unemployment for foreign youth has been higher than that of nationals of same age group. In France the unemployment rate was 6 percentage points higher from that of nationals and in Sweden as much as nearly 13 percentage points (see Table 1). France’s weakness has more to do with employment difficulties affecting second

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generation immigrants, whose situation paradoxically is often worse than that of their parents, even though they have had the benefit of French education system. In Sweden high unemployment rates of immigrant youth can be explained by the character of migration where labour migration accounts for insignificant proportion of all the migrants. On the other hand, humanitarian migration and its associated family migration have accounted for 60 to 80 per cent of all foreign migration to Sweden over the past fifteen years (Lemaitre 2007). Additionally, large number of immigrants arrived to Sweden in 1990ies at times of adverse economic conditions which can be expected to have a significant impact on the labour market performance.

In UK the picture is similar to that of other countries with ethnic minority men tending to have rates of unemployment often twice those of comparable men of British ancestry. Visible minorities, especially in the second generation, tend to have much higher rates of unemployment, reaching 25 per cent and above for Caribbean and Pakistanis/Bangladeshis. First- and second-generation Caribbean and Pakistani/Bangladeshi

1 Foreigners are non-citizens, including citizens of other EU Member States.

2 In 2009, though, in Estonia unemployment of immigrant youth was higher by 6 percentage points (see below) (Eesti Statistikaamet 2010).



men, together with first-generation African and Indian men have higher rates both of unemployment and of semi- and unskilled –manual work than those of British ancestry (Cheung & Heath: 2007).

For Norway and Estonia Eurostat unemployment data for foreigners was not available at the moment of this analysis. In Norway, OECD research has shown that although foreign-born unemployment rates are quite favorable in international comparison, in 2007/2008 the incidence of foreigners' unemployment was almost three times as high as among the native-born (6.2 per cent and 2.2 per cent respectively) (Liebig 2009). Liebig points out that the labor market integration of immigrants and their children has to be seen in the context of Norway's high GDP per capita (second highest in the OECD), low unemployment and high labor market participation of both genders. It also has to be viewed against the backdrop of a Nordic-type welfare state (Liebig 2009).

In Estonia, there has been no significant immigration within last 20 years and thus majority of young people with immigrant background are second generation immigrants. During the times of high economic growth (2001-2008), unemployment for immigrant youth was lower than that of native born. This was largely due to employment in booming construction sector. With the arrival of economic recession, however, unemployment rate of immigrant youth grow more rapidly than that of native-born. In 2009, unemployment of immigrant youth was 6 percentage points higher than that of native Estonian youth (32.8 per cent and 26.7 per cent respectively) (Eesti Statistikaamet 2010). Compared to 2008 the unemployment rate of immigrant youth had tripled (from 11.1 per cent to 32.8 per cent) while for native Estonian youth it doubled (from 12.2 per cent to 26.7 per cent) (Ibid).

## Is discrimination an issue?

A combination of unfavourable factors such as fewer qualifications or problems related to the transferability of diplomas acquired abroad, more disadvantaged socio-demographic conditions such as living in economically backward areas, foreign language spoken in the family contribute to the exclusion of young immigrants from labour market. Still, in France, research converges on the finding that differences in diploma levels or social capital fail to explain entirely the obstacles facing immigrant youth on a job market (Silberman & Fournier 2007). Similarly the analysis in Estonia shows that even though education has a considerable influence on the occupational attainment in the first job, still the effect of ethnicity on labor market outcomes is strong. In case of similar educational levels young non-Estonians are achieving a significantly lower occupational status in their first job compared with Estonians (Lindemann 2009). This ethnic penalty is partially explained by the importance of country-specific human capital, nevertheless, also Estonian proficient non- Estonians achieve a significantly lower occupational status in their first job compared with Estonians (Ibid). Lindemann concludes that the potential explanation for non-Estonians ethnic penalty is discrimination from employers (Ibid).

Additionally, there is no general tendency for labour market disadvantages to become smaller in the second generation. Results of comparative analysis of labour market performance among different generations of immigrants in France have indicated that while the second generation have made considerable absolute gains in educational and occupational level, in relative terms they remain just as disadvantaged as their parents. The disadvantage they suffer is not just at the entrance of the labour market but also in the competition for higher-level occupational positions (Silberman & Fournier 2007). While there can be plausible explanations to labour market exclusion for first generation immigrants, it is difficult to explain why second generation immigrants still face those disadvantages. Thus, while the ethnic penalties calculated from statistical models of unemployment, occupation and earnings must not be equated directly with discrimination, there is considerable evidence from field experiments and surveys that unequal treatment on grounds of race or color is likely to be a major factor underlying the pattern of ethnic penalties.

While making argument for discrimination it is important to point out the major differences that

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exist within the immigrant populations of different countries. Youth from immigrant backgrounds are exposed unequally to unemployment based on their country of origin and ethnicity. In France, it is much more difficult for young people from African countries, whether first or second generation, to enter the labour market than it is for immigrants from European or Asian countries, with the North African countries having the highest unemployment rate (twice the average level) (Jobs for Youth 2009). In UK, Cheung & Heath have concluded based on their analysis that visible

## Discrimination in the labour market, is a serious barrier for the integration of immigrant youth into host society

minorities tend to have significant ethnic penalties while white minorities do not. Cheung & Heath argue based on their analysis that “at all levels of education the visible minorities had much higher probabilities of being unemployed than the charter population” (Cheung & Heath 2007). Thus, in UK discrimination can be a rather

likely explanation for the disadvantages experienced by the visible minorities in the second generation. The fact that ethnic penalties with respect to unemployment are not present for any of the white ethnic groups is also suggestive of racial discrimination as a major explanatory factor.

Similarly in France several studies have shown that some immigrant groups suffer from discrimination based on their ethnic or immigrant background, which partly explains their difficulty in finding employment (Jobs for Youth 2009). In Italy, based on the results of the research, Allasino *et al* have found situations of objective discrimination against young semi-skilled Moroccan men in recruitment procedures (Allasioni *et al* 2004). In Spain, through conducting field experiments de Prada *et al.* found that total net discrimination rate of young immigrant male applicants after all three stages of application procedures had been completed was 36 per cent (de Prada *et al.* 2000). In Sweden, Jonsson has found that there exists visible minority discrimination in the labour market: from among the five minority categories constructed by Jonsson based on their visibility the estimates to be employed become more negative as minorities become more visible (Jonsson 2007). And even after controlling for such variables as family origin resources and for personal educational attainment, he concludes that “visible minority status is a disadvantage in the job-search process” (Ibid). In EU-MIDIS survey less visible immigrant groups such as Russians and Central and Eastern Europeans declared less discrimination in work related domains. Nevertheless, Albanians and Romanians in Italy

reported rather high discrimination incidence when looking for work or at work (25 per cent and 20 per cent respectively) (EU-MIDIS 2009: 117).

Discrimination in the labour market, both at the entry level and at work, is a serious barrier for the integration of immigrant youth into host society. Surveys carried out in countries of EUMARGINS project have found the practice of discrimination against immigrant population in labour market quite prevalent. In recent EU-MIDIS survey the two most common domains in which respondents in most Member States experienced discrimination in the past 12 months were work related: when looking for work or while at work. In the same survey 37 per cent of North-Africans in Italy declared being discriminated within last 12 month when looking for work and 30 per cent of the respondents declared being discriminated at work (EU-MIDIS 2009: 43). Similarly, in France, discrimination of Sub-Saharan African respondents in work-related circumstances was relatively frequent – 39 per cent respondents declared being discriminated while looking for work and 22 per cent at work within last 5 years (EU-MIDIS 2009: 91). In Sweden, 41 per cent of Somalis reported being discriminated against when looking for work and 32 per cent at work within last 5 year period (Ibid.). While these numbers do not specify the share of young people among respondents, it can be argued that young or not so young members of so called visible groups fare the worst when it comes to direct or indirect discrimination.

Immigrants feel discriminated against also in their career opportunities. Thus, among all Central and Eastern European immigrants’ interviewee groups, with the exception of Romanian community in Spain, the dominant opinion was that a non-majority ethnic background is a barrier to workplace advancement (EU-MIDIS 2009: 113). Similarly, 13 per cent of Russians in Estonia also felt they were subjected to unequal treatment at their workplace in the past 5 years (EU-MIDIS 2009: 182). Silberman & Fournier report that second generation immigrant youth in France is similarly at disadvantage in the competition for higher-level occupational positions (Silberman & Fournier 2007). It has to be pointed though, that in Britain as well as in Sweden data analysis has found that second generation immigrants experience difficulties in entering job market, but once on the market, they hardly experience any ethnic penalty in occupational attainment (Cheung & Heath 2007; Jonsson 2007).

## Global financial crises and immigrant youth unemployment

One issue that has sometimes been raised by researchers is that ethnic minority unemployment is hyper-cyclical, i.e. there is some evidence that when unemployment rates increase generally, those for immigrants increase even more rapidly (Cheung & Heath 2007). Some studies indicate that in difficult economic situations employers are more likely to indulge tastes of discrimination and ethnic differences probably become more significant. Evidence from many OECD countries shows that immigrants, in particular recent arrivals, tend to

be especially affected by an economic downturn. In UK analysis of data over time has shown that through two major economic recessions and subsequent recoveries, employment rates for non-white immigrants have displayed more volatility than those of UK-born whites or white immigrants. In bad times employment rates of non-white male immigrants fall further, but recovery is also faster (Dustmann *et al.* 2003).

**When adequate policies are not in place to fight against discrimination, a violent backlash against inequality is also most likely to occur**

In Spain, the building sector, one of the pillars of earlier economic growth employed a high proportion of migrant men. As economic crises struck this sector the most, thus does increased unemployment. According to Spanish National Institute of Statistics, unemployment has affected foreigners more than natives and men more than women (cited in Feixa *et al.* 2010). The latter is explained exactly by the crises in construction sector.

## Critique of policy options

There are several reasons why discrimination in labour market should be tackled by policy makers. Zegers de Beijl categorizes the reasons into three categories: economic, social and moral (Zegers de Beijl 2000). Economically speaking, by discriminating employers fail to make full use of resources made available to them on the market. Additionally, a diverse workforce, with large pool of skills and experience is more likely to be creative and open to new ideas than one made up of homogenous team. In new globalised economy, immigrants' possible privileged insights about the markets abroad can bring added value to employer. Immigrants are likely to have contacts abroad and speak the language of client states. Socially discrimination may result in disintegration of society as race riots in several European countries have shown. When adequate policies are not in place to

**discrimination can be a source of economic inefficiency, social disorder and conflict**

fight against discrimination, a violent backlash against inequality is also most likely to occur. Thus, government's reluctance to address discrimination in society will in long term contribute to disintegration of society. And last but not least, morally, discrimination goes against established principles of equality that considers all human beings equal and deserve to be treated as such.

Compared to the situation few years back, current anti-discrimination policies in seven countries under study have expanded significantly. Among the countries UK has the most extensive anti-racism policy in place. Race Relations Act that was first adopted in 1965 was among first such laws enacted in Europe. Commission for Racial Equality that monitors discrimination has been in work since 1976. Sweden followed in 1986 by establishing a position of Ombudsman protecting the rights of those who were subject to ethnic discrimination and in 1999 a new law against discrimination in the labour market put the burden of proof on employers. With the transposition of EC anti-discrimination directives<sup>3</sup> all seven countries have in place legal framework for tackling discrimination in labour market.

However, significant problems remain. In Sweden, despite of the long-term experience with anti-discrimination policy, a common view is that actions so far have had limited effect. There seems, for example, to be little chance of succeeding in a legal case against an employer who is accused of discrimination, and penalties for violating discrimination laws are not

<sup>3</sup> The European Council Directive 2000/43/EC implements the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin; Directive 2000/78/EC prohibits employment discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation.

severe (Jonsson 2007). Similarly, in Estonia the number of complaints to Chancellor of Justice who by recent change of law has been made responsible for monitoring discrimination issues, has been low, if not to say close to none. In the background of discrimination practices reported through studies and surveys (see Kallas 2008; EU-MIDIS 2009; Lindemann 2009), this is clearly an indicator of either low awareness of rights by population at large or dominance of common view that filing a complaint will have little or no effect on practices prevalent in labour market.

French authorities, on the other hand, are reluctant to intervene against racial and ethnic discrimination or set up indicators that would measure the extent of discrimination. While some legal improvements have been made regarding the burden of proof, the number of complaints on file remains ridiculously low. Any policy that makes a move towards affirmative action is considered an unconstitutional violation of the right to equality. Only recently has the government started to track hiring discrimination with testing methods or operating discrimination awareness campaigns for employers (Silberman & Fournier 2007).

### About EUMARGINS

EUMARGINS is a collaborative project financed by the The Seventh Framework Programme for research and technological development (FP7) of the European Union.

Research institutions in Norway, Sweden, the United Kingdom, Estonia, Spain, Italy and France are members of the EUMARGINS project team. The research focus is on inclusion and exclusion of young adult immigrants in these seven European countries. The project lasts for 3 years; from 2008 to 2011.

New scientific knowledge produced by EUMARGINS will be published in the form of journal articles, reports, policy briefs and a final book. For the dissemination of policy recommendations, policy workshops will be organised in each participating country at the final stage of the project. An international scientific conference on the research findings will be organised in cooperation with the EU in 2011.

## Policy recommendations

Ethnic inequality in the labour market that is created by discrimination practices is a major policy challenge to European governments. As noted above, apart from contradicting the normative principles of equality of opportunity that most European governments uphold, discrimination can be a source of economic inefficiency, social disorder and conflict. It is therefore of utmost importance that European governments will pay a closer attention to the occurrence of discrimination and employ more resources in fighting discriminative practices. Current policy brief aims at presenting some general recommendations for actions based on the analysis carried out for this brief.

A set of general recommendations can be made:

**First**, governments in all seven countries need to improve monitoring discrimination by employers through field experiments and annual surveys. This especially concerns second generation immigrant youth that despite of being educated and socialised in the country, still face ethnic penalties in the labour market.

**Second**, anti-discrimination policy framework that is already in place needs to be made more visible to immigrant youth together with increasing the awareness about their rights. Studies have shown that although anti-discrimination bodies have been operating in the country for some time already, reporting about racial or ethnic discrimination has been very low in almost all countries.

**Third**, EU should encourage benchmarking and best practice exchange among national agents in the field of labour market discrimination with special focus on second generation young immigrants. Countries can learn a big deal from each other's experiences in tackling racial and ethnic discrimination. This can be achieved through European Network of Equality Bodies (EQUINET) and programme financing.





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