

UP2YOU. Uniting Practices for second generation YOUTH

Policy Brief

**Funded by the European Commission
DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion
In the European Union Programme for Employment and Social Solidarity
PROGRESS (2007-2013)**



**Uniting Practices
for 2nd generation
YOUTH**



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This publication is supported by the European Union Programme for Employment and Social Solidarity – PROGRESS (2007-2013).

This programme is implemented by the European Commission. It was established to financially support the implementation of the objectives of the European Union in the employment, social affairs and equal opportunities area, and thereby contribute to the achievement of the Europe 2020 Strategy goals in these fields.

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UP2YOU Policy brief

“UP2YOU. Uniting Practices for second generation YOUTH” is a project based on the collection and exchange of practices regarding the transition of 2nd generation youth from education to the labour market. The activities included a) an initial desk research aimed at taking a picture of the respective national situations; b) the collection of practices in four partner countries - France, Germany, Italy and Spain –; and c) the organization of four transnational seminars with the participation of experts from all partner countries. While project activities have been carried out in the abovementioned countries, practice exchange has involved two more European countries: Romania and the Czech Republic, which participated as “observing partners” in consideration of their shorter immigration history.

The practice exchange that was carried out in the four transnational seminars addressed four distinct topics regarding second generations: i) employment practices; ii) education practices; iii) creation of job opportunities; and iv) identification of marketable skills for second generations. In all of these seminars experts from the six partner countries have participated and exchanged experiences and opinions based on the practices implemented in the respective countries as well as their own experiences. This policy brief intends to summarize the major issues that have emerged as well as highlight some of the inputs that have led the partnership to elaborate a set of policy recommendations in an attempt to transcend national borders and translate them at a European level.

From education to employment: an overview of the transition of 2G youth in the partner countries

Firstly, it should be highlighted that a clear difference has emerged throughout the project and in all transnational seminars between the two partner countries with a longer and consolidated immigration history – France and Germany – and the other two – Italy and Spain – where second generations have just started to look out and represent a social subject with own peculiarities. The burden of the economic crisis is one more crucial factor shared by Italy and Spain that has a severe impact on the labour market and in particular on youth employment. In particular, in these Mediterranean countries, second generations represent primarily a study subject that appeals almost exclusively to the academic and the private/non-governmental sectors. As a consequence, the only “qualitative” data available come from academic/private researches or have to be extracted from a combination of official data of different sources, as is the specific case of Italy. In addition, since the presence of second generations is such a young phenomenon in these countries, the research available mainly focuses on the family/education environments and very rarely on employment and the labour market. It is understandable hence that specific practices addressing second generations and

targeting the education/labor transition were difficult to find. The practices collected have thus been selected on the base of a less ambitious combination of benchmarks: either practices addressing second generations but not necessarily education and/or employment; or practices targeting the education/employment spheres of “youth” in general.

In France and Germany, where “second generations” as such have been a steady reality for decades now and where second, third and even fourth generations are difficult to detect - and where they are named “immigrant descendants” (in France) and “people with a migration background” (in Germany) - the main stress is on whether second generations should to be addressed by specific policies and practices or not. In the first case there is a risk of (positive) institutional discrimination; in the latter, discrimination is more latent at individual level. There is general agreement, however, that such discrimination is based more on economic criteria rather than on truly ethnic ones as it is hold to be.

Employment, along with housing, is in fact one of the sectors where discrimination emerges more clearly in all of the partner countries. Discrimination in the education area is more complex to detect but the fact that students of immigrant origin end up in vocational secondary schools in much larger numbers than their autochthonous peers suggests that some forms of discrimination do exist against these students. Germany is the country where this is more evident, with a “dual system” that guarantees apprenticeship and a high probability of getting employed in that sector. This same system, however, is also said to contribute to discriminate second generation students, who believe that this is the only chance for them to access the labor market. In Italy and in Spain research findings demonstrate that it is quite frequent for teachers of the compulsory school to suggest non-autochthonous pupils to choose vocational secondary schools rather than high schools because they believe that vocational schools are more „adequate“ 2G children and more likely to meet their families’ expectations.

A brief overview of the partner countries

Germany is in a rather favorable position as regards the transition of youth, including youth with a migration background, from education to employment. Youth unemployment is generally low in the country – in particular when compared to other European states. However, although there are no numbers on the unemployment rate of 2nd generation youth, it can be assumed that young people with a migration background are likely to have a higher unemployment rate compared to the German average, due to their comparatively lower educational achievements as well as discrimination on parts of the employers. Still, an important means for young people in entering the labour market remains the German dual vocational training system, which is regarded as being a major factor for fighting youth unemployment.

France is one of the European countries with the largest presence of second generations. Immigrants’ descendants seem to benefit from better living conditions than immigrants themselves and the data on poverty show that immigrants’ descendants place themselves in between first generation immigrants and the rest of the population. The country is quite advanced as to practices

and policies addressing youth employment. Notwithstanding this, project findings suggest there is a gap between the educational system and the labour market, with school not sufficiently employment-oriented.

Spain seems to be the country which currently presents the most adverse conditions to second generation youth primarily due to the economic crisis. Ever since the late Eighties, when it has turned into a destination country for immigrants, Spain has witnessed an increasing growth in immigrants' numbers. Immigrants' children can acquire citizenship, as part of the integration measures taken by the government. Notwithstanding this, the education system does not appear to have sufficiently adapted itself so as to successfully integrate immigrants' children. The economic crisis has interrupted pro-integration policies and worsened the general situation of immigrants. According to the experts participating in the seminars, integration has not only stopped but is in regression and integration policies are being reduced in the name of austerity. Unemployment rates, particularly youth unemployment, are today among the highest in the EU and a recent employment reform has placed immigrants in an extremely vulnerable position. As a consequence of this situation, many immigrants are returning to the countries of origin. Many second generation youths are also expatriating to other EU countries, but these data are impossible to collect since these youth are Spanish citizens.

Similarly to Spain, *Italy* pays the costs of both being a country of younger immigration and of having been heavily hit by the global economic crisis. The combination of a strict immigration law and the raise of youth unemployment makes the immigrants' children future perspectives in the country harder to pursue. Second generations in Italy are neither a juridical subject nor a political target. They are not a priority on the politicians' agenda and no specific policies address them. Citizenship rights here are denied at least until the age of 18, thus exposing second generation children to structural discrimination starting at school. In the absence of national plans addressing the transition of the youth (all the youth) from education to the employment, second generations share with their autochthonous peers the same difficulties to certain degrees. Youth policies in Italy are very weak, while youth unemployment is growing rapidly. In this perspective, it could be said that the economic crisis has somehow contributed to "equalizing" labour opportunities. Since the largest portion of second generations in Italy is still of young age - although their number is rapidly increasing - access to the labor market is still viewed as majorly regarding their parents - first generation immigrants - rather than immigrants' children. It should be highlighted, however, that a growing number of local governments, along with the third sector, is more advanced in proposing initiative that address second generations, as the practices collected demonstrate. Most such practices, however, aim at contributing to the 2G's overall social integration and very frequently they target school education.

Segregation in the school system?

School represents not only children's major socialization agency in all countries, it also stands as the main bridging opportunity between the institutions of the reception society and the immigrant family. Although the school systems of all partner countries guarantee equal access to students regardless of their citizenship or ethnic background, project findings indicate that second generation children and youth are disadvantaged. Social background and school outcomes are closely linked, thus contributing to determining forms of educational segregation. In fact, 2nd generation youth can be considered as disadvantaged from

this point of view, since their parents often have a disadvantaged socio-economic background due to lower educational achievements – or non-recognition of qualifications obtained abroad. Lower school leaving certificates also decrease the chances to get a good apprenticeship. In the current political debate on youth unemployment in Southern Europe, Germany's dual vocational training system plays an important role. Countries like Spain, Portugal and Italy are thinking of adopting the system. There are pilot projects in these countries. On the other hand, Germany's **school system** is criticised for not creating equal opportunities and even creating segregation, since apprenticeships end up regarding primarily children of migration background. This sort of segregation, however, does not belong to Germany only. In Spain, Italy and France, statistic data on school attendance demonstrate the existence of "educational ghettos", i.e., schools with a particularly high percentage of students of foreign origin. Based on the seminars' practice exchange, the following were identified as being some of the major factors that can expose 2G students to discrimination within their educational path:

- The **selection age of secondary school path**: a lower age exposes children to more risks of structural discrimination, since such choice is determined more by the family and/or teachers than by children themselves. Parents with lower educational achievements are more likely to choose a lower educational path for their children.
- The **existence of a structural system of transition** to the labour market and how this is organized; and
- The **parents' educational achievements** and the family's **social background**.

The 2G youth in the partner countries. Conclusion

So what is it all about when we speak of "immigrant second generations"? The discussion in all transnational seminars naturally raised this question at the conclusion. The project initial definition of "second generations" – people born in one European country to immigrant parents or born abroad but who immigrated before school age – represented the final question, too. This fact – the renewed need to continue talking about the definition and the essence of second generations and the subsequent advantages/constraints they are supposed to experience by virtue of their being 2G – was surprising to the project partners and to many external participants. If second generations are not identifiable by citizenship nor by any other objective/quantitative criteria, how do we know that we are talking about one distinct group? On the base of which criteria can we conclude that they are disadvantaged or at risk of discrimination at school or in the labour market? The need to clarify such questions led to some of the project major findings. Firstly, "second generation youth" are not *one* social subject but a whole of *many* subjects, the only shared commonality being represented by the migration experience within their families' memory – something that survives in different degrees between the cultural, symbolical and unconscious spheres of each individual. Secondly, the external perspective leads to question the risks of discrimination, in which the influence of "visible" signs of "ethnic diversity" – e.g., alien names/surnames and/or physical traits – plays a major role (direct/individual discrimination). Finally, the most dangerous forms of discrimination against "second generation", however, were commonly identified by experts as being hidden in structural discrimination. Just to mention some of the examples provided above, the family's economic background and social capital can have a notable impact in determining the overall educational

and professional paths of the individual; or the high rate of second generations that choose a vocational school.

The debate that took place on the above points in each of the seminars placed the experts on different positions. Firstly, the definition of “second generations” was not appreciated in particular by those experts who had a migration background themselves – some indicated the expression “new citizens” as more appropriate. While there was general agreement on the fact that these youth can be at risk of discrimination, the discussion on which strategies would be more effective in order to counteract discrimination led to two major opinions: some experts from Italy and Spain claimed that there will be no guarantee of equal opportunities for second generations until they are not regarded as a peculiar social/juridical subject and hence addressed by specific measures to their advantage. On the other hand, however, most experts pointed out that such specific measures would be (positive) discrimination in themselves and hence not appropriate to promote equal opportunities and fight social inequalities. General agreement was found on the following: what truly marks the invisible border between 2G youth and their “autochthonous” peers is the economic dimension. This leads in turns to considering the youths’ and their families’ **social capital and social networks** as key factors in determining the risks of being exposed to discrimination.

Policy recommendations

- ✚ **Citizenship rights** are the first step to guarantee equal opportunities in education as well as in the labour market and should be guaranteed to all 2G children. The case of Italy, where children born to foreign parents can only acquire citizenship at the age of 18 and at certain conditions, demonstrates that most 2G children first experience structural discrimination at school due to the lack of Italian citizenship (for example, when they find out they cannot participate to a school journey abroad). Citizenship is also essential in guaranteeing equal access to the labour market since some jobs may not be open to foreign citizens (e.g., public employment).
- ✚ **Education:** The educational system is the basis for a successful transition into employment and it should be guaranteed that all youths benefit of the same opportunities to obtain good qualifications and choose educational/training paths. Some of the actions that could be taken in this direction are:
 - a) **Increase awareness of teachers/educators** to diversity issues and the value of multiculturalism;
 - b) **Education curricula:** Project findings in all partner countries (with the exception of Germany) indicate the existence of a gap between the educational system and the labour market. The school system in these countries is not sufficiently employment-oriented. Education curricula should thus gradually integrate general aspects of the labor market so as to help the youth orientate themselves and harmonize their expectations with the reality of employment;
 - c) **Mentoring projects** for school children can be very important, as the German practices demonstrate. By presenting role models, these projects can support pupils in their decision of what to do once school is finished.
- ✚ **Combine education and apprenticeship:** adequate policies promoting secondary school students' apprenticeship within private business should be implemented in all countries. The experience of Germany with its dual educational training system is regarded as helping to guarantee skilled professionals as well as reducing youth unemployment rates. It provides youths with theoretical as well as practical skills for their professions.
- ✚ **Acknowledging drop-out.** Project findings indicate that second generation children are at a higher risk of dropping out in all partner countries. While this fact leads most national governments to take measures to prevent youth from dropping out, less is done to help drop-out students to enter the labour market, thus exposing these youths at a higher risk of social exclusion. Governments should thus take adequate measures in this direction, for example developing national plans of alternative professional training (as in the case of the French Schools of Second Chance) and/or professional contracts for youths not holding a diploma.

- ✚ **Antidiscrimination.** Youth with a migration background – who are often 2nd generation – are considered to be a disadvantaged group in the transition from education to employment in the participating countries – mainly due to segregation and an average lower social background. Thus, there should be a system that supports and includes all youths, in particular from disadvantaged groups, for instance such as the Youth Employment Service in Germany that aims at providing everybody “with the opportunity to take up an apprenticeship or studies”. This one-stop agency can be regarded as an example of good practice in particular for implementing a Youth Guarantee in EU member states.
- ✚ **Employment: education to diversity.** In order to reduce discrimination and enhance diversity and a positive view on 2nd generation youths with their potentials such as languages and intercultural skills, employers should be sensitised to this topic, e.g. within a project such as “Heterogeneity in Vocational Orientation and Apprenticeships” (Germany). Staff with managerial functions and staff responsible for apprenticeships should also be sensitized to diversity on a regular basis. Multicultural skills should be presented as an added value for the company/employer and should be screened for in the selection process for new employees.
- ✚ Adequate **youth policies** for employment should be taken at national level to increase the chances also for second generation youth to access the labour market.
- ✚ **Recognition of qualifications obtained abroad** should be guaranteed and the procedures for obtaining it should be clear and easy to submit. Although not regarding second generations as such, recognitions can regard their parents and can have a positive impact on the children’s perception of what is “achievable”. Additionally, academic recognitions can of course contribute to improve the family’s economic situation and consequently influence both the parents’ and the children’s present view and future expectations.
- ✚ The youths’ and their families’ **social capital and social networks** are regarded as key factors in determining the risks of being exposed to discrimination. Hence, any initiatives or policies aimed at favouring the second generations’ paths in education and in the labour market should include the role of social capital and networks in order to be more effective.
- ✚ **Collaborate and network:** foster dialogue and cooperation between institutions, education providers, public and private employment agencies, trade unions, employers, and non-governmental organizations and associations. The case of BONBOARD agency in Italy is an example of how such cooperation can efficiently contribute to match supply and demand in the labor market with particular regard to 2G youth. In Germany, apprenticeships are made possible by the participation of private companies in the government’s policy.
- ✚ **Practice exchange should be encouraged at all levels** – local, national, and European. The experts participating in all four transnational seminars clearly showed appreciation for having had the opportunity to listen to and learn from the others’ experiences. Most of them – in particular,

experts representing public authorities, agreed that such opportunities are scarce in their professional life and should be encouraged.

- ✚ **Collect data, foster research and create a European database.** The project findings clearly indicate there is a lack of data on 2G youth due to their statistical “invisibility”. While qualitative data are more easy to find due to former researches carried out in all partner countries to different extents, statistical data regarding second generations are hard to collect and mostly come from a combination of other available data - such as the parents’ place of birth combined with their children’s and the parents’ and children’s nationalities compared. Official data on education were more easy to find in all involved project countries, whereas data regarding the 2G youth’s employment access and careers were harder to find. Hence, it is important that all involved actors contribute with their own data (for ex: access of 2G youth to employment agencies). The creation of a European database that collects all data and establishes collection criteria should also be encouraged in order to allow countries comparability and contribute to harmonize national legislations addressing the 2G youths’ education and access to the labour market, in a European perspective.