

Foreword

Social mobility is an important policy objective to foster inclusive economies and societies. It may not be surprising that many immigrants face specific difficulties to progress along the income ladder: they often have to overcome greater barriers to mobility linked among others to the fact that they have been raised and educated in a different environment and education system, and that they may not have the same command of the host language as natives. However, one would hope that, at least for children of immigrants who are native-born, these barriers would disappear and they could enjoy the same opportunity for social mobility as their peers. Yet, evidence suggests that native-born children of immigrants tend to still lag behind their peers with native-born parents in many OECD countries, especially in Europe. This is particularly worrying since these are a large and growing group, and their integration is vital for social cohesion and economic prosperity.

Against this backdrop, the OECD, with the support of the European Union, has analysed the links between parental disadvantage for immigrants and the educational and labour market outcomes of their children across EU and OECD countries, in comparison with native-born parents and their children. This report presents the results of this work which builds on the rich, ongoing joint EU and OECD work on integration. It entails some important findings and lessons for policy-making. Its main message is that helping immigrant parents to be fully and autonomously functional in the host country society is not only important for the immigrants themselves but is also an important precondition for better outcomes of their children.

The good news is that the often large gaps in education and labour market outcomes observed between immigrant and native-born parents are reduced for their children. What is more, some groups of children of immigrants – including children of EU mobile citizens in Europe and many groups in North America such as those with parents from Asia – have higher upward mobility than children of native-born. At the same time, there are persisting obstacles that often seem to prevent a similar success story for children with non-EU-born parents in Europe, who have less upward mobility than their native-born peers with native-born parents and otherwise similar socio-economic background. This large divide in the opportunity of different groups of children from foreign-born parents requires close policy attention, and we therefore believe that further policy action and new policy initiatives are necessary.

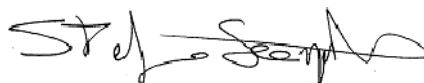
Investing in the integration of immigrant parents is important for their successful integration and entails intergenerational pay-offs. Integration of immigrants should be seen as a long-term investment; it allows tapping into the potential of the immigrants themselves and their children. A key role here is played by immigrant mothers, who are currently often neglected in integration efforts, particularly if they arrived as family migrants.

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