European Sociological Review, 2024, **XX**, 1–16
https://doi.org/10.1093/esr/jcae007
Advance access publication 9 February 2024
Original Article

OXFORD

The same social elevator? Intergenerational class mobility of second-generation immigrants across Europe

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Ethnicity and social class are two of the main axes stratifying life chances in developed societies. Nevertheless, knowledge of the integration of ethnic minorities into the pattern of class reproduction remains incipient as evidence stems mostly from studies concentrating on specific ethnicities or single host countries. This article advances this knowledge by providing a comparative perspective on the intergenerational occupational mobility of second-generation immigrants and the majority population across 26 European countries. Drawing on pooled data from the European Social Survey (2004–2018), the article demonstrates that ethnic penalties arise for employment and occupational mobility in many countries, however, with crucial differences *across* and—to a smaller extent—*within* major country groups. Across countries, ethnic barriers for the second generation are connected to their social integration in the host society and the composition of the first migrant generation, emphasizing the importance of familial and social support for social advancement. By contrast, I detect no link between anti-immigration norms and ethnic penalties, and only mixed evidence for the role of integration policy. The article concludes that 'ethnicity matters' in many European societies, even if ethnic cleavages vary according to the composition of migrant populations and the context in the host society.

Introduction

Although class and ethnicity are recognized as two of the main forces stratifying life chances in developed societies, the lack of empirical research at their intersection is widely bemoaned (Li and Heath, 2016; Panichella, Avola and Piccitto, 2021). Accordingly, cleavages between natives and migrants have been documented as 'ethnic penalties' and 'ethnic premiums' in socioeconomic outcomes (Heath and Cheung, 2007), but generally without accounting for the class origin of ethnic groups. In turn, social mobility research has explored the associations of class positions across generations (Treiman and Ganzeboom, 2000; Bukodi, Paskov and Nolan, 2020; Bukodi and Goldthorpe, 2021), but efforts to address ethnic differences in social reproduction have often been stymied by data limitations. In recent years, attempts to reconcile these two research fields have been undertaken by pioneering studies focusing on the mobility patterns of migrants and ethnic minorities in single countries.

This article advances these nascent efforts by offering a comparative perspective on ethnic penalties in intergenerational class mobility. First, I study the mobility patterns of second-generation immigrants and the majority population across 26 European countries. By doing so, the article examines the extent to which insights from extant single-country studies generalize to a larger set of countries and casts light on differences and similarities in ethnic cleavages across European societies. Second, I examine if ethnic disadvantages are explained by theoretically informed macro-level variables related to immigrant selection, social integration, anti-immigration norms, and migration policy (van Tubergen, Mass and Flap, 2004; Heath, 2007). The comparative approach helps to synthesize the findings of existing single-country studies into a coherent picture and advances knowledge of the factors that shape immigrant trajectories in the class structure of host countries.

Drawing on pooled data from the European Social Survey (ESS) over the 2004–2018 period, I derive

Received: January 2021; **revised:** September 2023; **accepted:** January 2024

ethnic penalties in employment and intergenerational class mobility for 'disadvantaged' second-generation migrants while controlling for their origin class and other sociodemographic characteristics. To test contextual hypotheses, I merge a series of country-level indicators with the individual-level data. The findings demonstrate ethnic penalties for movements *into* as well as *within* the occupational class structure in many countries, however, with crucial differences *across* and—to a smaller extent—*within* major country groups. Second-generation immigrants tend to have a higher risk of unemployment and fare worse in moving up the social ladder in the Continental, the Northern, and the Baltic country groups. Ethnic disadvantages emerge only for mobility and not employment in the Southern countries (Panichella, Avola and Piccitto, 2021), and they largely vanish in the Liberal and the Eastern countries (Li and Heath, 2016). Across countries, ethnic barriers for the second generation are strongly associated with their social integration in the host society and the composition of the first generation—in terms of their language proficiency and motives for migration—highlighting the importance of familial and indirect support for social advancement. By contrast, I detect no evidence of a link between anti-immigration norms and ethnic penalties and only mixed evidence for the role of migration and integration policy.

More than 15 years ago, Putnam (2007: p. 137) famously called a future increase in ethnic diversity 'the most certain prediction that we can make about almost any modern society'. Today, more than 10 per cent of the population in European countries are foreign-born (United Nations, 2019), and many European societies—from the more affluent Western countries to the 'European periphery' and Eastern Europe—are inexorably becoming more ethnically heterogeneous. It is thus paramount to identify ethnic barriers to social advancement, as they may lead to economic inefficiency, violate the principle of equality of opportunity, and become a source of ethnic tensions and social disorder (Heath and Cheung, 2007: p. 1). For first-generation migrants, past work has documented ethnic disadvantages in employment and occupational attainment and attributed these to the composition of migrant populations (Ballarino and Panichella, 2015; Damelang, Ebensperger and Stumpf, 2021; Kanas and Steinmetz, 2021) and contextual factors such as migration policy, social welfare, and the labour market situation in the receiving countries (van Tubergen, Mass and Flap, 2004; Kogan, 2006; Fleischmann and Dronkers, 2010; Koopmans, 2010; Spörlein and van Tubergen, 2014; Platt, Polavieja and Radl, 2022).

However, as the second generation is increasing, attention is shifting to the assimilation process of the native-born descendants of immigrants (Heath, Rothon and Kilpi, 2008; OECD, 2017; Drouhot and Nee, 2019). Analysing their patterns of intergenerational reproduction, some studies have kept track of the fortunes of specific ethnic groups across multiple countries (Guveli *et al.*, 2017; Zuccotti, Ganzeboom and Guveli, 2017). Yet, most studies have zeroed in on class mobility of ethnic minorities and migrants in specific countries, including the United States (Duncan and Trejo, 2015), the United Kingdom (Zuccotti, 2015; Li and Heath, 2016), or Norway (Hermansen, 2016).

My comparative approach makes three key contributions to this literature. First, the article effectively complements existing comparative research on the socioeconomic outcomes of the second generation (Algan *et al.*, 2010; Pichler, 2011; Gorodzeisky and Semyonov, 2017), which has thus far inadequately accounted for class background and, therefore, underappreciated differences in starting positions between migrants and natives. Second, the cross-country perspective assesses whether findings from the aforementioned single-country studies extend to countries that are rarely selected for in-depth analysis due to a paucity of high-quality data sources, eventually allowing me to establish whether ethnic penalties follow consistent patterns across country groups. Third, the article provides information on the relationships between contextual factors and ethnic penalties across many countries with diverse migration histories, advancing the understanding of the reasons why gaps between natives and second-generation immigrants persist.

Social mobility of ethnic minorities

Ethnic penalties of second-generation immigrants

First-generation migrants often experience downward mobility as the human capital acquired in their homeland—such as labour market skills and educational certificates—is not fully transferable to the destination country or insufficient for higher occupational achievements (Chiswick and Miller, 2009; Gorodzeisky and Semyonov, 2017). According to classic assimilation theory, future generations are in a more advantageous position since they grow up, are educated, and enter the labour market in the host society. Empirically, narrowing gaps between the children of migrants and natives are observed for educational attainment, but the evidence for labour market outcomes remains mixed as the second generation continues to experience persistent unemployment and stagnating chances to reach higher classes (Crul and Vermeulen, 2003; Heath, Rothon and Kilpi, 2008; Drouhot and Nee, 2019). Thus, neo-assimilation or segmented assimilation theories came to the fore and predicted convergence to the majority

population, however at different speeds depending on the barriers faced by ethnic groups (Portes and Zhou, 1993; Alba and Foner, 2015). Among the most significant barriers underlying ethnic cleavages between the children of migrants and their native counterparts are ethnic segregation and ethnic discrimination.

Ethnic segregation matters inasmuch as migrants are concentrated in schools and residential neighbourhoods, where they are encouraged to build up ethnicity-specific social capital rather than forge friendships and social contacts with the majority population (Kanas *et al.*, 2012). If migrants socialize less with the majority population, they lack access to relevant job networks, are less equipped with country-relevant 'know-how', and lack authentic proficiency in the host language (Lancee, 2010). In consequence, their children receive less familial support than their native contemporaries from the same class background.

Ethnic segregation—and the quality of an ethnic environment—may also affect the life chances of the second generation directly. Coining the term 'ethnic capital', Borjas (1992) argued that ethnic closure may limit inter-ethnic contacts and restrain efforts to blend in with the majority population. In cohesive ethnic communities, higher-generation immigrants might grow disillusioned by the socioeconomic outcomes of their group, inhibiting aspirations for upward mobility. Eventually, migrant networks might block upward trajectories directly as they demand 'excessive claims on group membership' or uphold 'downward levelling norms' (Portes, 1998). By contrast, cohesive ethnic communities may also advance the fortunes of higher-generation immigrants, as migrants do not necessarily seek a better life for themselves but want to improve the living conditions of their descendants. Familial support and an 'immigrant optimism' (Kao and Tienda, 1995) may help second generations to cultivate higher professional aspirations (Crul, Keskiner and Lelie, 2017). Moreover, within-group solidarity in ethnic communities may also exert a positive influence on labour market success if it nurtures strong community sentiments in which ambitions thrive and attainments are rewarded. Past work, however, suggests that the benefits of migrant networks differ between entry into (low-skilled) labour market segments and occupational advancement (Gërxhani and Kosyakova, 2022).

Discrimination may further contribute to ethnic penalties. Recent experiments have demonstrated that covert characteristics and subtle cues—such as names, accents, or appearance—are sufficient to induce discriminatory treatment in markets and everyday interactions (Weichselbaumer and Schuster, 2021; Zhang, Gereke and Baldassarri, 2022). Discrimination is specifically pronounced for migrants from disadvantaged ethnic origins with salient differences in cultural practices and phenotypical appearance. These differences work as cues for ethnic in-group bias and evoke beliefs regarding ethnic hierarchies. Along these lines, Schmaus (2019) suggests that low host-language proficiency may serve as a shortcut to hidden information about competences and may provoke taste-based discrimination. Indeed, migrants from Arabic, North African, and Middle Eastern nations—and to some extent Eastern Europe—are most regularly subjected to prejudice, stereotypes, and anti-immigrant sentiments in Western countries (Schneider, 2008). These forms of ethnic discrimination may corrupt access to entry-level jobs and stymie future career progression.

Despite improvements on their parents' generation, second-generation migrants still face barriers in catching-up with their native contemporaries. Thus, I expect that *second-generation migrants face disadvantages in upward mobility compared to natives from the same class background (H1)* and *second-generation migrants face disadvantages in employment compared to natives from the same class background (H2)*.

Heterogeneity in ethnic penalties across countries

The multi-ethnic composition of the European population is largely a legacy of complex migration trajectories. In the post-war period, the domestic labour demand of the 'old immigration' countries attracted guest workers from former colonies and the 'European periphery'. In the 1970s, tighter immigration controls reduced inflows mainly to family reunification programmes, chain migration, and asylum seekers from war-plagued areas such as the Balkans, the Middle East, or Africa (de Haas, Castles, and Miller, 2019). Over time, unique combinations of immigration policies, employment regimes, and welfare arrangements led to diverse immigration experiences *between* and—to a smaller degree—*within* Liberal and Continental countries (Morissens and Sainsbury, 2005; Papadopoulos, 2011). Accelerated by the collapse of Eastern Bloc regimes, the Northern and Southern countries also evolved from emigration countries into immigration countries (Koopmans, 2010; Papadopoulos, 2011), although with different levels of generosity and inclusiveness (Aradhya, Grotti and Harkonen, 2023). For instance, 'new receiving' Southern countries primarily recruited labour migrants in the low-skilled sector (Kogan, 2006). In the former countries of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, foreigners are often 'internal migrants' who moved within the borders of a then-sovereign state, and second-generation migrant populations are formed by a complex mixture of international migration and nation-building (Dinesen and Hooghe, 2010; Gorodzeisky and Leykin, 2022).

These variegated streams of migration have shaped the ethnic makeup of European societies and confronted ethnic minorities with different social barriers (Platt, 2005). Conversely, host countries differ in their composition of migrant populations in terms of their human capital endowments and, specifically, their language skills (Damelang, Ebensperger and Stumpf, 2021). If parents lack skills in the host language, they may provide less direct support in the household context (Dorn and Zweimüller, 2021). Inasmuch as language barriers further lead to fewer ties with the native majority group, indirect support also declines as first-generation immigrants do not possess the social networks required to advance their children's educational and occupational careers.

Prior research also points to the 'positive selection' of migrant groups in terms of socioeconomic aspirations (Polavieja, Fernandez-Reino and Ramos, 2018). Thus, across countries, migrant populations vary in their motives for migration. In particular, economic migrants are found to perform better in labour markets than refugees, who are less favourably selected (Chiswick, 1999; van Tubergen, Mass and Flap, 2004). Positively selected first-generation migrants are, in turn, more prone to convey work-related values to future generations (Ichou, 2014; van de Werfhorst and Heath, 2019; Engzell and Ichou, 2020). This familial assistance specifically reduces ethnic penalties in upward mobility, as it keeps second-generation migrants from rushing into low-skilled occupations.

Besides the composition of migrant populations, the reception in the host country affects the economic opportunities of the second generation. Xenophobia and prejudice against visible ethnic minorities vary considerably across European societies (Heath and Cheung, 2007). Specifically, anti-immigrant attitudes differ to the degree that foreigners are portrayed as competitors for scarce resources in labour markets (Polavieja, 2016) or as cultural threats to dominant lifestyles and values (Quillian *et al.*, 2019). For migrants, these sentiments translate into animosity and unfavourable treatment by employers and institutions, and, more generally, in market exchange, leading to continued ethnic disparities across generations.

Ultimately, discrimination may lead to the social exclusion of migrant groups. Even though the second generation attends the domestic educational system—regarded as the great 'equalizer' in language skills and social capital (Crul, 2013; Borgna and Contini, 2014; Heath and Brinbaum, 2014)—anti-immigration norms may cause concentration in schools of low quality and vocational tracks (Ballarino and Panichella, 2015) as well as ethnic cliques within schools. Furthermore, anti-immigrant sentiments may impede migration flows and keep the size of ethnic communities in check, thereby keeping co-ethnic networks of the second generation small. In as far as migrants intermix less with the native population and receive less support from co-ethnic ties, ethnic cleavages are reproduced in the long run.

Finally, host countries also differ in their integration policies (Solano and Huddleston, 2020). Among other things, integration policies aim to facilitate access to employment, labour market skills training and language courses, and naturalization; protect minorities from discrimination; and ease the certification of foreign credentials (Kanas and Steinmetz, 2021; Platt, Polavieja and Radl, 2022). While these measures are primarily aimed towards newcomers, they indirectly affect second generations as they help their parents to settle in the host society. Moreover, anti-discrimination policies affect the second generation directly, since they prohibit and monitor unfair treatment based on ethnic ancestry (Amiraux and Guiraudon, 2010). As a side effect, these efforts to prevent discriminatory practices also signal general attitudes of racial prejudice and social norms about tolerated behaviour towards ethnic minority groups (Heath and Cheung, 2007: p. 11; Platt, Polavieja and Radl, 2022: p. 353).

To summarize, I expect that *ethnic penalties in upward mobility and employment of second-generation migrants are higher if the first-generation migrant population has (a) a lower host language proficiency and (b) a larger share of refugees (H3)*. Furthermore, I hypothesize that *ethnic penalties in upward mobility and employment of second-generation migrants are higher if (a) anti-immigration attitudes in the native population are stronger and (b) the second-generation migrants are less socially integrated (H4)*. Finally, *ethnic penalties in upward mobility and employment of second-generation migrants are higher if (a) the migrant integration policies are less favourable and (b) anti-discrimination policies are weaker (H5)*.

Data, variables, and methods

The analyses are based on pooled data from eight consecutive waves of the ESS (2004–2018). The ESS is a high-quality survey with harmonized measures across countries and rigorous methodological standards. To study the intergenerational mobility of migrants, the ESS is well suited as it includes detailed occupational information that is consistently coded for respondents and their parents, and it accounts for respondents' migration history, including the birth countries of their parents. It does so for a sizeable number of respondents and, importantly, immigrants in many European countries, rendering it attractive to analyse cross-country differences in migration (Dinesen and Hooghe, 2010;

Pichler, 2011; Ballarino and Panichella, 2015; Platt, Polavieja and Radl, 2022).

However, one key limitation of the ESS is that questionnaires are not translated into minority languages that are spoken by less than five per cent of the population. Hence, the ESS might oversample migrants with a high proficiency in the language of the destination country (Tegegne and Glanville, 2019; Platt, Polavieja and Radl, 2022). The underrepresentation of small migrant populations could lead to a downward bias in the estimates for ethnic penalties. While past research has thus far documented little to no bias from this design issue for first-generation migrants (van Tubergen, 2006), I expect the effect on their children to be even lower as they are on average more fluent in the host language.[1]

The net sample of the study comprises 182.628 male and female respondents of the working-age population (aged between 18 and 65 years at the time of the interview) residing in 26 countries.[2] Of those, 174.106 belong to the native population and 8.522 are second-generation immigrants. Supplementary Table S1 reports the number of natives and second-generation immigrants in the sample for each country. Supplementary Table S4 shows the marginal distributions of origin and destination class for natives and second-generation immigrants.

Class destination

I code the class destinations of respondents according to the European Socioeconomic Classification (ESeC). Socioeconomic class schemas are grounded in the idea that life chances in market societies are fundamentally stratified by the occupational division of labour (Rose and Harrison, 2010). The ESeC conceptually rests on the EGP class schema (Erikson and Goldthorpe, 1992) and offers a categorical approach to social classes based on employment relations and occupations. To derive the ESeC score, I follow the methodology of Rose and Harrison (2010) and use, on the one hand, occupational data according to the three-digit ISCO-88 classification system and, on the other hand, information on employment status to distinguish, in a first step, between employers/self-employed and employees and, in a second step, between large and small employers and employees with and without supervisory responsibilities.[3] I create a condensed three-class version of the ESeC: (i) Salariat: large employers, higher and lower grade professionals and managers, and higher-grade technicians and supervisors; (ii) Middle class: intermediate occupations and administrative employees, small employers and own-account workers, lower supervisors and lower technicians; and (iii) Working class: lower services, sales, clerical, and technical occupations, and non-skilled and routine occupations.

Class origin

I code the class origin of respondents—that is, the father's and mother's class positions when the respondents were 14 years old—based on a list of occupational categories provided by the ESS for waves 2–9.[4] This information is used to generate a three-class simplified ESeC (Rose and Harrison, 2010): (i) Salariat: professional, technical, and higher administrator occupations; (ii) Middle class: clerical, sales, and service occupations; and (iii) Working class: skilled, semi-skilled, unskilled, and farm workers. I subsequently apply the dominance approach (Erikson, 1984) to derive a single class origin variable for the respondents. In doing so, I create a harmonized three-class schema for class destinations and origins.

Unemployment

I code the chance of unemployment based on respondents' main activity in the last seven days. The unemployed include those who are currently looking for a job and those who want a job but are not actively looking for one.[5]

Migration background

I distinguish second-generation immigrants from natives based on their parents' countries of birth. I consider second-generation immigrants to be all those with two foreign-born parents, plus respondents with mixed parentage (the 2.5 generation) if the class background of the foreign-born parent was higher or equal to that of the native-born parent. Additionally, I include all those migrants who were foreign-born but arrived at the age of 10 or earlier, because they presumably migrated with their parents and spent a large part of their formative years in the destination country. The analysis focuses on migrants of 'disadvantaged' ethnic origin from Eastern Europe, the Middle East and Africa (broadly conceived), and South America. The main part of the analysis treats these migrants as a single group, but I also perform additional analyses for separate origin groups.

Country groups

In the main analysis, I sorted countries into six groups according to migration history, labour market characteristics, and welfare policy (Esping-Andersen, 1990; Koopmans, 2010; Papadopoulos, 2011): (i) Continental: Austria, Belgium, Switzerland, Germany, France, and the Netherlands; (ii) Liberal: Ireland, United Kingdom; (iii) Northern: Norway, Sweden, Finland, Denmark; (iv) Southern: Greece, Spain, Portugal, Italy; (v) Eastern: Slovakia, Slovenia, Poland, Croatia, Hungary, Bulgaria, Czech Republic; and (vi) Baltic: Lithuania, Estonia, and Latvia. Even though clustering misses important variation within country

groups, the small migrant populations of some host countries make it necessary for statistical analysis.

Country variables

To assess the role of contextual variables, I use the following country variables: *Language proficiency* is measured by the share of first-generation migrants with high language proficiency (mother tongue or proficient) averaged across the two EU Labour Force Survey ad hoc modules in 2014 and 2021. *Share of refugees* is measured by the share of first-generation migrants who indicated 'international protection or asylum' as the reason for migration averaged across the two EU Labour Force Survey ad hoc modules in 2014 and 2021. *Anti-immigration attitudes* are calculated from the responses to two statements in the ESS asking respondents if they think immigration is good or bad for a country's economy (0–10) and if immigrants make the country a better or a worse place to live (0–10). The two responses are combined into an additive index for which I calculate the weighted average among the native population as context variable for each country and wave. *Social integration* is measured by the difference between migrants and the majority population in the responses to how often they socially meet with friends, relatives, or colleagues (from 1 to 7; where 1 is never and 7 is every day; source: ESS). Macro-level variables for integration policy are based on the Migration Integration Policy Index (MIPEX) (Solano and Huddleston, 2020) and are matched at the country-wave level. Specifically, I use the aggregate *MIPEX* covering eight dimensions (access to nationality, anti-discrimination, education, family reunion, health, labour market mobility, permanent residence, and political participation) and separately examine the role of *Anti-discrimination* policies. Supplementary Tables S6–S8 provide an overview of the availability and descriptive statistics of macro-level variables.

The main outcome variables are analysed using logit models (for unemployment) and ordered probit models (for class destination). The analyses use post-stratification weights provided by the ESS (based on age group, gender, education, and region) to account for sample selection bias and non-response error. Sociodemographic control variables include gender, age, and domicile size.[6] In doing so, the analysis accounts for age differences between the native population and the typically younger second generation. Supplementary Table S2 provides the descriptive statistics for individual-level variables. Analyses include country and wave dummies to account for unobserved country-specific and time-specific confounders.[7] Supplementary Tables S9 and S10 report robustness tests using multilevel models.

Results

Identifying ethnic penalties in intergenerational mobility

Figure 1 plots the share of second-generation immigrants and the majority population who moved out of the working class (of those with a working-class background), reached the salariat (of those without a salariat background), and were unemployed for the 26 European countries and the six country groups.

Across many countries, considerable penalties for employment and movements within the occupational class structure persist for second-generation immigrants. Yet, there are important differences across country groups. In the Continental countries, ethnic penalties arise for employment and upward mobility, but they seem to be more pronounced for employment. These results chime with the evidence on employment brought forth for Austria, Belgium, France, and Germany (Kalter and Granato, 2007; Kogan, 2007; Phalet, 2007; Algan *et al.*, 2010; Luthra, 2013; Gorodzeisky and Semyonov, 2017). Moreover, penalties seem to be smaller for moving out of the working class than for reaching the top of the occupational ladder.

In Northern countries, there are stark penalties for unemployment, but they virtually disappear for upward movement out of the working class. The evidence of unemployment penalties echoes recent single-country studies in this country cluster. For Sweden, Aradhya, Grotti and Harkonen (2023) and Jonsson (2007) document higher levels of unemployment among the second generation compared to natives. Similarly, Hermansen (2013, 2016) suggests that second-generation migrants in Norway experience disadvantages in accessing the labour market. Despite considerable intergenerational assimilation (see Supplementary Figure S6), the present study also reveals small penalties for reaching the salariat—but none for moving out of the working class—in the Northern country cluster. This finding is at odds with a study by Hermansen (2013), which detects no ethnic penalties in access to the service class, but it relates to prior research that found that selected ethnic origin groups are still disadvantaged in terms of earnings, education, and occupational attainment (Jonsson, 2007; Hermansen, 2016; Bratu and Bolotnyy, 2023) in Northern countries. For the less mature immigrant regimes in the Southern countries, the pattern is reversed: There are strong barriers for mobility but not for employment. Past work on this 'new receiving' Mediterranean region has attributed similar results to the high labour demand for low-skilled workers (Panichella, Avola and Piccitto, 2021).

In the Liberal countries, ethnic penalties arise neither for employment nor for upward mobility. This conflicts

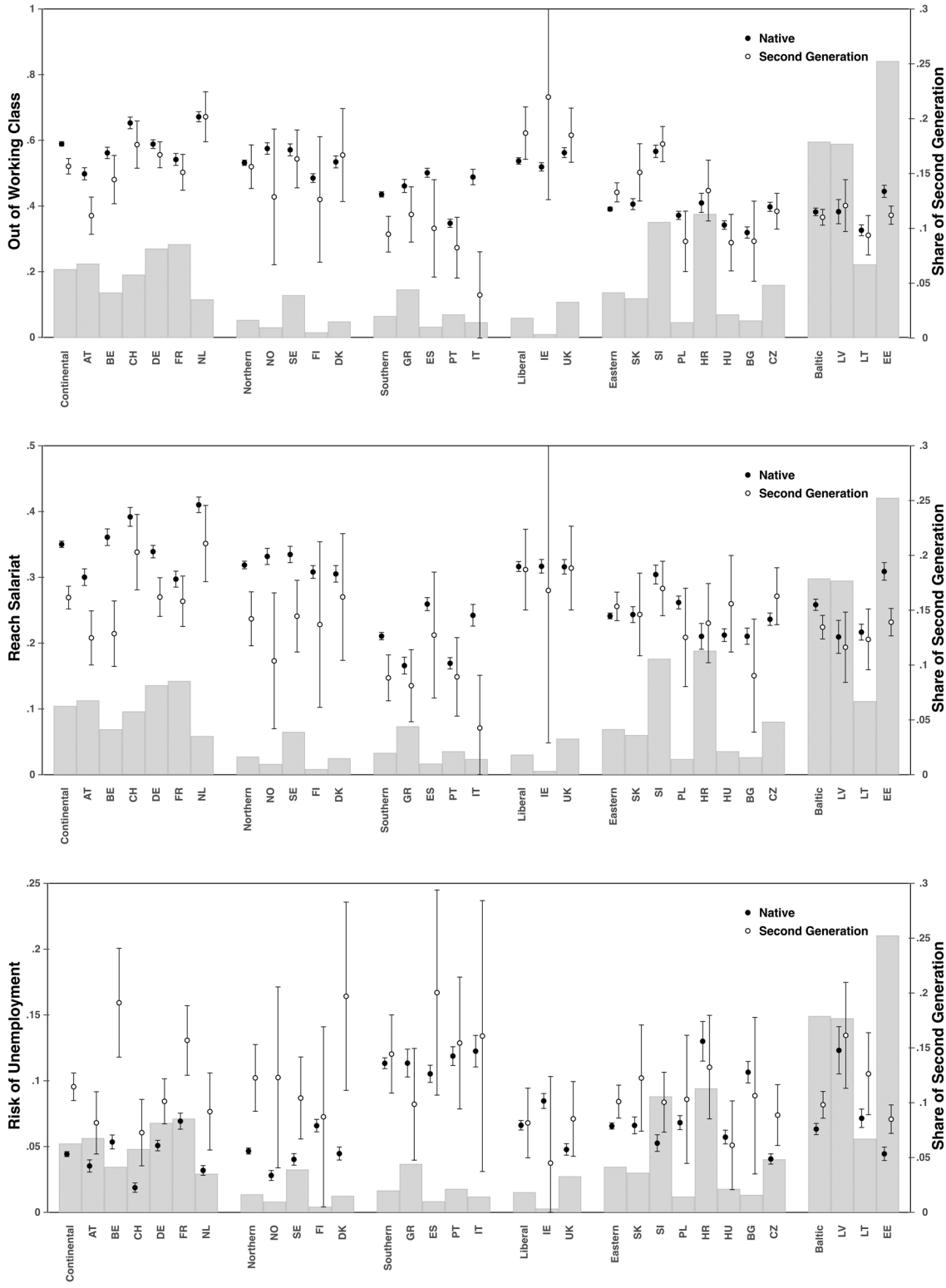

Figure 1 Occupational mobility and employment

Note: The error bars show 95% confidence intervals. The grey bars plot the share of respondents with ethnic minority background (right axis). Values are cut at 1 (upper panel) and 0.5 (middle panel).]

Table 1 Ethnic penalties in intergenerational mobility

	(1.1)	(1.2)	(1.3)	(1.4)	(1.5)	(1.6)
	Continental	Northern	Southern	Liberal	Eastern	Baltic
Origin class (Ref.: High)						
Mid	−0.334***	−0.332***	−0.500***	−0.245***	−0.452***	−0.425***
	(0.0402)	(0.0283)	(0.0533)	(0.0603)	(0.0304)	(0.0453)
Low	−0.722***	−0.612***	−1.019***	−0.649***	−0.939***	−0.735***
	(0.0411)	(0.0208)	(0.0690)	(0.0473)	(0.0308)	(0.0476)
Migration background (Ref.: None)						
Second Generation	−0.123***	−0.160***	−0.255***	0.0287	−0.00820	−0.259***
	(0.0281)	(0.0614)	(0.0711)	(0.108)	(0.0269)	(0.0314)
Gender (Ref.: Male)						
Female	−0.0757***	−0.0416**	−0.0300	0.0509	0.154***	0.353***
	(0.0196)	(0.0205)	(0.0246)	(0.0376)	(0.0157)	(0.0172)
Age	0.0108***	0.0177***	0.00665***	0.00997***	0.00657***	0.00625***
	(0.000527)	(0.000609)	(0.00111)	(0.00139)	(0.000820)	(0.00108)
Log Pseudolikelihood	−50833	−34063	−22856	−19865	−44428	−14838
Clusters	44	31	22	16	45	15
Observations	49,310	33,242	22,515	17,819	45,099	14,643

Notes: Ordered probit model. The dependent variable Destination Class is coded such that higher values correspond to higher class. Not reported: Domicile, Country Dummies, and Wave Dummies. Post-stratification weights applied. Country-year clustered standard errors are reported in parentheses. $***P < 0.01$, $**P < 0.05$, $*P < 0.1$.

with findings by Algan *et al.* (2010) and Gorodzeisky and Semyonov (2017), who show unfavourable labour market outcomes for second-generation immigrants in the United Kingdom. This conflicting evidence, however, can be attributed to the fact that these former studies have inadequately accounted for class background. Indeed, ethnic penalties in the UK are strongly attenuated when controlling for parents' occupational status (Zuccotti, 2015; Li and Heath, 2016), even though there are distinct patterns for the main ethnic groups (Platt, 2007).

In Eastern countries—where past evidence is scant—migrants of the second generation demonstrate a lower likelihood to be employed but noticeably a higher likelihood to move out of the working-class compared to the native population. Supplementary Figure S7 suggests that these employment penalties mostly arise for foreigners from other Eastern countries. Differences, however, are small and disappear in almost all cases when examining individual countries. In the Baltic nations, migrants have a higher chance of unemployment and are disadvantaged in reaching the highest class, even though this pattern can be mainly attributed to Estonia.

In Tables 1 and 2, I report regression models controlling for different starting positions on the social ladder and the compositions of migrant and native populations. Supplementary Figure S4 presents the ethnic penalties for individual countries.

In line with Figure 1, the tables demonstrate considerable ethnic penalties for many country groups. In the Continental, Northern, and Baltic country clusters, second-generation immigrants are disadvantaged in intergenerational mobility and face a higher chance of unemployment. In the Southern countries, barriers to employment are annihilated, whereas there are quite strong penalties for intergenerational mobility. Conversely, in Eastern countries, second-generation migrants are more likely to be unemployed but there is no disparity in class reproduction. As indicated in Figure 1, no ethnic disadvantages appear for the Liberal countries. Supplementary Figure S5 shows that ethnic penalties do not differ significantly according to gender, while Supplementary Figure S6 shows that ethnic penalties have decreased for the second generation compared to the first. Supplementary Figure S7 provides further insights into penalties for three different origin groups.

Overall, these results support the segmented assimilation view and show that penalties persist for the second generation. Across countries, penalties are of different magnitudes and arise in different steps in individuals' occupational careers. Unlike for first-generation migrants, ethnic differences cannot be attributed to the incomparability of occupational backgrounds or the imperfect transferability of human capital. Since the second generation was educated and spent their

Table 2 Ethnic penalties in employment

	(2.1)	(2.2)	(2.3)	(2.4)	(2.5)	(2.6)
	Continental	Northern	Southern	Liberal	Eastern	Baltic
Origin class (Ref.: High)						
Mid	0.0696	0.230***	0.403***	0.197	0.208**	0.137
	(0.0682)	(0.0575)	(0.0972)	(0.132)	(0.0895)	(0.126)
Low	0.392***	0.340***	0.743***	0.633***	0.563***	0.302*
	(0.0681)	(0.0576)	(0.113)	(0.0991)	(0.0825)	(0.176)
Migration background (Ref.: None)						
Second Generation	0.527***	0.787***	0.0106	0.126	0.329**	0.520***
	(0.0769)	(0.221)	(0.149)	(0.297)	(0.140)	(0.0777)
Gender (Ref.: Male)						
Female	-0.0966	−0.115	0.170**	−0.703***	−0.126**	−0.336***
	(0.0745)	(0.0819)	(0.0678)	(0.0664)	(0.0550)	(0.0936)
Age	−0.0145***	−0.0165***	−0.0201***	−0.0254***	−0.0189***	−0.00421
	(0.00339)	(0.00337)	(0.00290)	(0.00355)	(0.00146)	(0.00442)
Log Pseudolikelihood	−8911	−6148	−7943	−4302	−10719	−3649
Clusters	44	31	22	16	45	15
Observations	49,310	33,242	22,515	17,819	45,099	14,643

Notes: Logit Model. The dependent variable Unemployment is coded 1 if the respondent was unemployed at the time of interview. Not reported: Constant, Domicile, Country Dummies, and Wave Dummies. Post-stratification weights applied. Country-year clustered standard errors are reported in parentheses. *** $P < 0.01$, ** $P < 0.05$, * $P < 0.1$.

formative years in the destination country, the source of ethnic cleavages can more likely be attributed to the norms, institutions, and policies of the receiving country.

Explaining heterogeneity across countries

To identify sources for the differences in ethnic penalties across countries, I proceed with analysing the role of contextual macro-level variables on ethnic penalties for intergenerational mobility in Table 3 and unemployment in Table 4. All models control for the class origin and the main sociodemographic characteristics of respondents.

Comparing the two tables, I observe that the contextual variables are more influential for mobility penalties than for unemployment penalties. Furthermore, the most important predictors of second-generation penalties are related to characteristics of their parent generation. Thus, ethnic penalties were considerably affected by the language proficiency of the first generation (models 3.1 and 4.1) and the share of refugees among the migrant population (models 3.2 and 4.2). Supplementary Tables S11 and S14 show that these statistical effects are robust when analysing a reduced sample in the closer range to the year in which the context variable was measured. This emphasizes the importance of parental support for catching-up and provides strong support for H3.

Turning to the context of reception, I find no association between ethnic penalties and anti-immigration attitudes in models 3.3 and 4.3. This null finding holds when using a broader index of anti-immigrant sentiments, including a cultural dimension and anti-immigrant sentiments as measured by the European Value Study in Supplementary Tables S12 and S15. One reason why I might not observe such a result is that xenophobic sentiments might dampen migration flows and thereby lead to a more positive selection of migrants. Consequently, actual discrimination in occupational trajectories might be offset by a greater share of overly achieving migrants in a country.

Models 3.4 and 4.4 test for the association between social integration—specifically, the difference in social integration between migrants and the native population—and ethnic penalties. The coefficient in model 3.4 suggests that if the difference between natives' and migrants' integration is larger—that is, if migrants have fewer social ties than natives—ethnic mobility penalties increase. This finding is partly supported by robustness checks using another indicator for social integration in Supplementary Table S12. By contrast, cleavages in social integration between the migrant and the majority populations do not account for their differing likelihood to be unemployed in model 4.4. Thus, there is no evidence for H4a and partial evidence for H4b as I find that social integration matters only for

Table 3 Estimates from ordered probit models on class attainment

	(3.1)	(3.2)	(3.3)	(3.4)	(3.5)	(3.6)
Origin class (Ref.: High)						
Mid	−0.366***	−0.397***	−0.362***	−0.364***	−0.369***	−0.370***
	(0.0167)	(0.0200)	(0.0179)	(0.0179)	(0.0167)	(0.0166)
Low	−0.797***	−0.814***	−0.767***	−0.770***	−0.803***	−0.807***
	(0.0189)	(0.0247)	(0.0195)	(0.0195)	(0.0206)	(0.0198)
Migration **Background** (Ref.: None)						
Second Generation	−0.115***	−0.112***	−0.150***	−0.148***	−0.180***	−0.154***
	(0.0206)	(0.0205)	(0.0202)	(0.0174)	(0.0207)	(0.0178)
Language Proficiency	−0.0506***					
	(0.0188)					
Second Generation × Language Proficiency	0.152***					
	(0.0168)					
Share of Refugees		0.0481***				
		(0.0159)				
Second Generation × Share of Refugees		−0.0809***				
		(0.0244)				
Anti-Immigrant Attitudes			−0.0519***			
			(0.0111)			
Second Generation × Anti-Immigrant Attitudes			0.0170			
			(0.0177)			
Social Integration				0.00647		
				(0.00710)		
Second Generation × Social Integration				−0.0838***		
				(0.0194)		
MIPEX					0.0482***	
					(0.0150)	
Second Generation × MIPEX					0.0199	
					(0.0210)	
Anti-Discrimination						0.0105
						(0.0147)
Second Generation × Anti-Discrimination						0.121***
						(0.0212)
Share of Migrants in Population	0.0572***	0.113***			0.0752***	0.0788***
	(0.0186)	(0.0192)			(0.0162)	(0.0162)
Country Fixed Effects	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No
Wave Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Log Pseudolikelihood	−190229	−120625	−188348	−188372	−190253	−190344
Countries	26	16	26	26	26	26
Country-Year Clusters	173	108	173	173	173	173
Observations	182,628	116,320	182,628	182,628	182,628	182,628

Notes: The dependent variable Destination Class is coded such that higher values correspond to higher class. Not reported: Gender, Age, and Domicile. The independent variables are standardized. Post-stratification weights applied. Country-year clustered standard errors are reported in parentheses. $^{***}P < 0.01$, $^{**}P < 0.05$, $^{*}P < 0.1$.

the occupational advancement of the second generation but not for employment.

Finally, the last two columns in Tables 3 and 4 test the statistical effect of integration policies. Across both outcome variables, the aggregate MIPEX indicator is not correlated to the magnitude of ethnic penalties across countries. This is not surprising as migration policies are mainly tailored to integrate direct migrants.

Table 4 Estimates from logit models on unemployment

	(4.1)	(4.2)	(4.3)	(4.4)	(4.5)	(4.6)
Origin class (Ref.: High)						
Mid	0.222***	0.293***	0.184***	0.191***	0.239***	0.239***
	(0.0398)	(0.0448)	(0.0372)	(0.0370)	(0.0403)	(0.0400)
Low	0.593***	0.683***	0.496***	0.506***	0.645***	0.645***
	(0.0423)	(0.0503)	(0.0391)	(0.0389)	(0.0463)	(0.0441)
Migration background (Ref.: None)						
Second Generation	0.348***	0.333***	0.449***	0.430***	0.364***	0.368***
	(0.0581)	(0.0713)	(0.0534)	(0.0506)	(0.0564)	(0.0566)
Language Proficiency	0.223***					
	(0.0484)					
Second Generation × Language Proficiency	−0.127**					
	(0.0507)					
Share of Refugees		−0.212***				
		(0.0638)				
Second Generation × Share of Refugees		0.194**				
		(0.0922)				
Anti-Immigrant Attitudes			0.175***			
			(0.0597)			
Second Generation × Anti-Immigrant Attitudes			−0.0234			
			(0.0597)			
Social Integration				−0.0811***		
				(0.0226)		
Second Generation × Social Integration				−0.0591		
				(0.0661)		
MIPEX					0.0205	
					(0.0405)	
Second Generation × MIPEX					0.00800	
					(0.0652)	
Anti-Discrimination						0.106***
						(0.0395)
Second Generation × Anti-Discrimination						−0.0188
						(0.0592)
Share of Migrants in Population	0.0355	−0.0804			−0.0637*	−0.0361
	(0.0451)	(0.0641)			(0.0350)	(0.0343)
Country Fixed Effects	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No
Wave Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Log Pseudolikelihood	−42,938	−26,718	−42,092	−42,107	−43,091	−43,040
Countries	26	16	26	26	26	26
Country-Year Clusters	173	108	173	173	173	173
Observations	182,628	116,320	182,628	182,628	182,628	182,628

Notes: The dependent variable Unemployment is coded 1 if respondent was unemployed at the time of interview. Not reported: Gender, Age, Domicile, and Constant. The independent variables are standardized. Post-stratification weights applied. Country-year clustered standard errors are reported in parentheses. $^{***}P < 0.01$, $^{**}P < 0.05$, $^{*}P < 0.1$.

However, in line with the theoretical expectations, I find that the ethnic penalty in upward mobility is lower if anti-discrimination laws are stronger. This underscores the importance of anti-discrimination policies not only for the first generation (Platt, Polavieja and Radl, 2022) but also for preventing and prohibiting unequal

treatment of their children. Supplementary Tables S13 and S16 show that these results are reproduced using alternative model specifications.

Discussion and conclusion

This article has examined patterns and determinants of ethnic penalties in intergenerational mobility across Europe. Despite a vast literature about immigrants' educational and labour market outcomes (Heath and Brinbaum, 2014) on the one hand, and intergenerational mobility across countries on the other (Bukodi, Paskov and Nolan, 2020), the understanding of how second-generation migrants integrate into systems of intergenerational class reproduction remains incipient. Previous efforts to provide evidence on this central indicator of assimilation have been hampered by inconsistent coding of class membership of parents and their offspring—requiring researchers to study ethnic minorities net of class background—as well as by a lack of harmonized data across countries—limiting insights to mobility patterns of ethnic groups in single countries only. This article had two aims: First, to ascertain if the insights on intergenerational mobility of ethnic minorities accumulated in single-country studies generalize to a wider set of countries; and, second, to test if theoretically informed contextual factors explain differences in ethnic penalties across countries.

Regarding the first aim, I detected considerable ethnic cleavages in occupational attainment and employment. In many European countries, children of migrants have a lower chance of getting out of the working class, a lower likelihood to reach the salariat, and a higher risk of unemployment. However, important heterogeneity exists *between* and—to a lesser degree—*within* country clusters.

Ethnic penalties are relatively consistent in the 'old' Continental migration countries. In Southern countries, penalties arise for climbing the social ladder but not for employment—thus echoing the pattern of the first generation (Panichella, Avola and Piccitto, 2021). In Northern countries, penalties tend to occur for access to employment (Jonsson, 2007; Hermansen, 2013; Aradhya, Grotti and Harkonen, 2023) and to a smaller extent for occupational advancement. This latter finding, however, should be interpreted with caution as it partly conflicts with evidence from single-country studies using more comprehensive administrative data (Hermansen, 2013). The analysis reveals no evidence for ethnic penalties in Liberal countries (Li and Heath, 2016). Yet, the sample size keeps one from distinguishing ethnic origin groups, which have been found to perform quite differently in the United Kingdom (Platt, 2007; Zuccotti, 2015). Finally, Baltic and Eastern countries exhibit heterogeneous patterns as ethnic penalties appear only in some countries. In this part of Europe, the labour market performance of ethnic minorities merits closer inspection in future studies disentangling the complex historical processes of internal and international migration (Gorodzeisky and Leykin, 2022).

My comparative approach extends knowledge of ethnic occupational penalties to countries hitherto not examined, connects to existing single-country studies, and, in so doing, helps to synthesize their findings into a coherent picture. Insofar as it provides insights into specific countries, its findings need to be evaluated against the backdrop of previous research, analysing administrative records or surveys that oversample migrant populations. Those data sources might afford more nuanced accounts of when and for whom ethnic penalties accrue but with limited comparability across societies due to less harmonization in the approaches of data collections and in the measurements of key variables compared to the ESS (Heath and Cheung, 2007).

Similarly, the article's 'bird's eye view' needs to be interpreted in tandem with past work focusing on specific ethnicities in multiple countries and multiple ethnicities in specific countries. Thus, the present analysis has centred on ethnic penalties that accrue to migrants from 'disadvantaged' origin regions, as this group is shown to encounter the most severe barriers to social advancements (Borgna and Contini, 2014; Zuccotti, Ganzeboom and Guveli, 2017; van de Werfhorst and Heath, 2019). Due to the restricted number of respondents from this—growing and gradually maturing—part of the population in the ESS, the approach remains 'colour blind' by necessity and cannot account for subtle differences within this diverse group of migrants (beyond the analysis in Supplementary Figure S7). In this regard, my work benefits from complementary studies that provide a finer account of the success of specific ethnic groups, such as Pakistanis and Indians in the United Kingdom or Turkish communities in Western Europe (Guveli *et al.*, 2017; Zuccotti, Ganzeboom and Guveli, 2017).

Two further limitations are noteworthy. First, the approach focuses on long-range movements between social classes and might overlook occupational changes within social classes that improve living conditions, such as movements within the working class from precarious jobs to high-stability employment conditions (Panichella, Avola and Piccitto, 2021). Second, surveys are more likely to capture migrants with higher host-language proficiency, who tend to be better integrated and are economically successful. While I find no systematic evidence for 'positive selection' in the ESS (see Supplementary Table S5), this could bias the estimates for ethnic penalties downwards and lead one to underestimate the full extent of the disadvantages faced

by the second generation. Future investigations need to further decipher which types of migrants choose to complete voluntary surveys and how this affects the literature on ethnic penalties.

Regarding the second aim, a cross-country analysis adverts to contextual factors explaining the magnitude of ethnic penalties. First, ethnic outcomes of the second generation are strongly connected to the composition of the first generation. Ethnic penalties are higher if the first-generation migrant population has a lower fluency in the home language and consists disproportionately of refugees. Even though the two variables might only proxy the sociocultural distance to the native population more generally (Dorn and Zweimüller, 2021), this finding highlights the importance of familial and indirect support throughout individuals' educational and occupational careers. Far from being on a level playing field, the children of migrants still face, on average, inferior life chances than their native peers, as they inherit the disadvantages of their parental generation.

Second, I find no evidence that ethnic penalties increase with stronger opposition to immigration in the majority population. However, underlying this null finding, there might be two mechanisms that are working in opposite directions. Thus, anti-immigrant sentiments may well hinder social advancement among migrants, but they could also simultaneously restrict migration flows to 'positively selected' migrants with a high cultural proximity to the native population. Third, the results indicate that the social integration of the second generation matters for their occupational success. In this context, my research links to recent studies that disentangle the relative importance of inter-ethnic and co-ethnic ties to economic advancement (Gërxhani and Kosyakova, 2022) and highlight the role of ethnic segregation in social mobility (Zuccotti and Platt, 2017). Fourth, the findings on policy indicators are mixed as they mostly address the integration of direct migrants, with limited effects on the second generation. Nevertheless, I find that anti-discrimination policies seem to remain crucial even for future generations of migrants.

As ethnic diversity plays an increasing role not only in the affluent Western societies but also at the 'European periphery', it is more important than ever to understand the social barriers encountered by ethnic minorities. In concert with existing and future studies exploring the mobility patterns of specific ethnic groups, my comparative perspective on shared patterns and similarities across host countries presents a detailed panorama of the assimilation processes of ethnic minorities. Chiming with neo-assimilation theories, I find that ethnic disadvantages for second-generation migrants persist across various European host countries, leading us to doubt if they indeed ride on the same 'social elevator' (OECD, 2018).

Notes

1. Supplementary Table S5 compares the educational attainment of natives and migrants as derived from the ESS and the LFS for each country. There is no systematic evidence that ESS underrepresents migrant respondents with low educational attainment (who are also more likely to have low proficiency in the host-country language) as compared to the LFS.
2. Overall, the number of missing values is low. In particular, list-wise deletion leads to the exclusion of 6.0 per cent of the original sample due to missing values for origin class and 6.9 per cent for destination class.
3. I recode the ISCO-08 classification in waves 6–9 to the ISCO-88 using the conversion tool by Ganzeboom and Treiman (2019). Respondents who were unemployed at the time of the interview were sorted into a class based on the information about the occupation and the employment status of the last job. Respondents who were never in employment were excluded from the analysis.
4. For waves 2 and 3, the occupational categories slightly differ and, in addition, include a category 'middle or junior manager', which I sorted to the second ESeC-category 'Middle Class'. Supplementary Figures S2 and S3 compare mobility rates from the present approach with those calculated from the ESS-DEVO dataset (Ganzeboom, 2013).
5. The category includes those who indicated that they are unemployed, but excludes inactive groups outside the labour force, such as those who are permanently sick or disabled and housewives or -men.
6. Unlike other studies, I pool observations for male and female respondents. Supplementary Figure S5 calculates ethnic penalties for men and women separately and does not reveal considerable differences in patterns.
7. When analysing contextual variables that are constant across waves, I drop country dummies due to multicollinearity and instead include a country-wave-specific control variable indicating the share of migrants in the population.

Supplementary data

Supplementary data are available at *ESR* online.

Data availability

The European Social Survey Cumulative File, ESS 1–9 (http://dx.doi.org/10.21338/NSD-ESS-CUMULATIVE) is available for download at https://www.europeansocialsurvey.org. The data from the EU-Labour Force Survey ad hoc modules were retrieved from Eurostat's online database. The data for MIPEX were downloaded at https://www.mipex.eu. The code for data management and analysis is available at https://osf.io/ut87n/?view_only=26b0cb2557dd4a29a679609174a022d6.

Acknowledgements

The author sincerely thanks the editors and three anonymous reviewers for their valuable comments on earlier versions of this manuscript.

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