



**Welcome remarks for the joint OECD-
Gulbenkian seminar on**

***Making Integration Work for Young
people with Migrant Parents***

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Paris, 23 March 2021

Dear State Secretary Pereira, Ladies and Gentlemen

It is a great pleasure for me to welcome you on behalf of the OECD to the joint OECD-Gulbenkian seminar on the integration of youth with migrant parents.

One in five young people living in EU and OECD countries are born abroad or are native-born and have migrant parents, and this share is rising virtually everywhere. However, as our work at the OECD has clearly shown, **their outcomes in terms of labour market and education are often below their peers who have native-born parents – especially in Europe.** In spite of some progress in the decade prior to the pandemic, educational outcomes of native-born children of foreign-born parentage at age 15 lag behind those of native-born parentage by half a year. For their older peers in the labour market, the youth employment gap between the two groups was 6 percentage points prior to the pandemic. While it is still too early to gauge the impact of the pandemic on youth with migrant parents, we know too well that it is exacerbating inequalities. It threatens not only the progress achieved, but risks hampering disproportionately the life-chances of young people with migrant parents who are entering the labour markets in greater numbers than ever before. This is a real threat to social cohesion in our societies and it is an apt time to discuss policies for better inclusion for this group.

Immigrants who migrated as adults often face difficulties due to the fact that they have been educated abroad and need to adapt to a new labour market, society and often also new language. This should not be the case for those who are raised and educated in the countries to which their parents immigrated. For this reason, especially the outcomes of native-born youth with migrant parents are often considered as the “benchmark” for the long-term success of integration policy. **Why do young people who were raised and educated in our countries and who just happen to have migrant parents have still lower labour market chances than their peers with native-born parents? What can be done to address this?**

At the occasion of today’s event, we are launching a publication that discusses these issues along 11 key lessons for policy-makers, based on good practice examples across

the OECD. *“Making Integration Work: Young people with Migrant Parents”* has benefitted from the support of the Fondation Roi Baudouin and the Stiftung Mercator, along with the authorities from Germany, Norway and Sweden. I would wholeheartedly like to thank the institutions involved for their support. This publication is the fourth in a series that also covered refugees, family migrants, and the assessment of foreign qualifications.

My colleague Elisabeth Kamm will present you the key findings in more detail in a few minutes, but let me briefly stress some of the main takeaways.

First, **early intervention provides the best pay-off**. Participation in early childhood education and care provides particular benefits for children of immigrants. Yet, they are often underrepresented – especially at the crucial ages of 3 and 4. However, integration of youth with migrant parents starts already with better integration of their parents. In particular, we need to do better in the integration of immigrant women. Previous work that we did with the European Commission on this issue showed that integration of immigrant women into the labour market provides important intergenerational benefits.

This brings me to the second point: **We need more role models**. Successes have to be celebrated and put forward. Likewise, the public sector must be a role model in providing equal opportunities for youth with migrant parents.

Third, **we need to address the persistent structural barriers that are specific to this group**. Youth with migrant parents have fewer networks and often lack knowledge about the functioning of the labour market. Mentoring programmes and civil society initiatives can play a crucial role in addressing this.

Finally, there is the issue of **discrimination**. It is alarming to see that, in many European countries, native-born youth with migrant parents feel more often discriminated than those who have themselves immigrated. This is undoubtedly linked with higher awareness of the issue and of the own experience of being subjected to discriminatory treatment. They no longer accept such discrimination – and neither should anybody!

These issues require more attention by all of us, and I very much look forward to the debates today. I thank you already for your active engagement, and hand over to Pedro Calado from Gulbenkian Foundation, who organised this event jointly with us.