



**Gianni D'Amato and  
Rosita Fibbi (Project Leaders),  
Marco Pecoraro, Didier Ruedin,  
Robin Stünzi, Eva Zschirnt**

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**Discrimination as an Obstacle  
to Social Cohesion**

University of Neuchâtel  
Swiss Forum for Migration and Population Studies  
Rue A.-L. Breguet 2, 2000 Neuchâtel, Switzerland

Contact: Rosita Fibbi, [rosita.fibbi@unine.ch](mailto:rosita.fibbi@unine.ch), T + 41 32 718 39 23

**Everyone is the architect of his/her own fortune. This meritocratic principle has a deep motivational impact on immigrants and their children and at the same time inspires integration policies aiming at strengthening immigrants' capabilities. Yet this promise is not always kept, as our studies show: labor market chances are influenced by the origin of an individual, infringing the equal treatment norm. Integration policies need to address this issue.**

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**Messages for Decision-Makers**

- Unfair treatment of citizens of immigrant origin and resident immigrants breaches the equality norm and threatens social cohesion. It is also a form of brain waste, contradicting the imperative of exploiting locally available (labor) resources in a country that wishes to reduce labor migration even for the highly qualified.**
- A public debate is needed to raise awareness of this shortcoming and to promote an assertive HR policy in public and private companies.**

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**Swiss and Qualified, yet Origin Still Matters for  
Children of Immigrants Looking for a Job**

In order to be selected for a job interview, naturalized children of immigrants educated in Switzerland need to file in 1.2 more applications than Swiss-origin candidates holding the same qualifications. This experimental study documents discrimination in hiring decisions in mainly private enterprises.

This overall rate differs significantly on various dimensions. *Candidates' country of origin* plays a major role: compared to their Swiss-origin counterparts, candidates of non EU-origin stand lower chances of being invited than EU-origin colleagues. Descendants of Kosovar immigrants face higher discrimination than Turkish descendants (1.31 vs 1.18), a finding that echoes a previous similar Swiss study. The overall discrimination level is the lowest for descendants of German immigrants, the EU-origin group tested, yet their rate varies the most from one occupation to the other: they are highly appreciated as electricians and most rejected as sales assistants. Indeed overall discrimination rate varies sharply according to *occupation*: lowest for nurses and highest for sales assistants.

The level of discrimination found in Switzerland compares favorably with the mean level of discrimination observed in similar studies in OECD countries. This is a general feature for the German-speaking countries, which traditionally require extensive documentation from job applicants. The detailed information provided allows the employers to have a better knowledge of the individual candidate's profile to make their hiring decision.

### **Discrimination of Swiss Nationals of Immigrant Origin Is Also an Issue in Career Advancement**

In spite of their local work experience, Swiss citizens of immigrant origin holding foreign acquired university credentials stand fewer chances to be selected for a senior position in comparison to Swiss citizens holding similar local credentials. This is also the case for Swiss citizens of immigrant origin holding local university credentials. This second experimental study highlights the existence of discrimination in career advancement in the public sector.

In spite of their spotless Swiss records, i.e. having acquired Swiss nationality and proven their abilities in their professional experience in Switzerland, candidates see their chances of career advancement influenced by *country of credential acquisition*. Compared to their counterparts holding local tertiary qualifications, candidates educated in a non-EU country stand lower chances of being invited than colleagues educated in Switzerland. Non-EU credentials are the least likely to yield to selection for career advancement, especially when tertiary education was acquired in a country outside Europe. EU credentials acquired in the neighboring countries are the most likely to yield to selection.

Chances of being selected vary markedly according to *occupations*: chances for candidates with foreign acquired education to access technical senior positions (e.g. chief of IT department) are much higher than to reach socially relevant managerial positions (e.g. director of a welfare institution). Finally, chances of being selected for candidates educated in a non-EU country differ by *linguistic region*: they are lower in the German speaking part of Switzerland.

### **Foreign Credential Recognition Improves Immigrants' Labor Market Outcomes**

There is evidence that immigrants “downgrade” upon arrival in the host country: they have trouble finding a job that matches their level of education and work experience. There is a significant association between the *country of credential acquisition* and the risk of educational mismatch, as it is shown by a study based on the Migration-Mobility Survey carried out in 2016 with almost 6'000 migrants who arrived in Switzerland in the last ten years.

### **Risks of mismatch vary however according to the country of credential acquisition.**

The highest rate of over-education is observed among Latin American workers (above 50%), followed by migrants from EU28/EFTA countries other than the neighboring countries (almost 40%). On the contrary, migrants from Asia – mainly professionals from India in the Migration-Mobility Survey – face a low incidence of over-education. Thankfully, the recognition of foreign qualification is associated with a lower risk of educational mismatch and thus is expected to improve the access to the labor market.

### **Both Values and Economic Factors Explain Swiss Attitudes Towards Foreigners**

Swiss workers' opinion towards equal opportunities for foreigners and Swiss citizens is influenced by both their level of education and their cultural values/beliefs, as documented by a study based on data from the Swiss Household Panel. Compared to the middle-educated workers, the low-educated exhibit negative attitudes/opinions towards foreigners; yet this strong link is driven mainly by differences in cultural values and beliefs. Highly-educated workers tend to express positive views about immigrants and their attitudes are not influenced by their cultural values and beliefs; yet they tend to hold anti-foreigner attitudes when confronted with an increasing risk of unemployment. We would argue that economic and cultural explanations should not be seen as competing theories for attitudes towards foreigners, but as complementary mechanisms that affect different parts of the population in distinct ways.

### **Key Publications**

- Fibbi, Rosita, Joëlle Fehlmann, Didier Ruedin, and Anne-Laure Counilh. “Discrimination des personnes issues de la migration hautement qualifiées dans le domaine du social?” Neuchâtel: Forum suisse pour l'étude des migrations et de la population, 2017.
- Pecoraro, Marco, and Didier Ruedin. “A Foreigner Who Does Not Steal My Job: The Role of Unemployment Risk and Values in Attitudes toward Equal Opportunities.” *International Migration Review* 50, no. 3 (2016): 628–666.
- Pecoraro, Marco, and Philippe Wanner. “Does the Recognition of Foreign Credentials Decrease the Risk of Being Mismatched in Education or Skills for Immigrants?” In *From Migrants to Expats. The Swiss Case*, edited by Philippe Wanner and Ilka Steiner. IMISCOE Research Series by Springer. Cham: Springer, Forthcoming.
- Zschirnt, Eva, and Didier Ruedin. “Ethnic Discrimination in Hiring Decisions: A Meta-Analysis of Correspondence Tests 1990–2015.” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 42, no. 7 (2016): 1115–34.