

## *Foreword*

Integration policy for immigrants and their children is high on the policy agenda in many OECD countries. This is due to a number of factors. Firstly, many immigrants have arrived in OECD countries over the past decade, often for reasons other than employment. Facilitating their integration into the labour market has become a key policy priority. At the same time, many OECD countries expect that a greater recourse to immigrants may be necessary to tackle labour shortages in the context of demographic ageing. For this to be a feasible and sustainable policy option, immigrants have to be well integrated into the economy and society in the host countries. Labour market integration, in the sense of good employment and career prospects, plays a crucial role here. Finally, there is growing concern over the education and labour market outcomes of their children, who are now entering the labour markets in larger numbers.

This volume, the second one in the OECD's *Jobs for Immigrants* series, describes and assesses the experiences of four OECD countries (Belgium, France, the Netherlands and Portugal) with respect to the integration of immigrants and their children into the labour market.

The introductory chapter compares the situation in the four countries to that of other OECD countries, and highlights some key findings from the analyses of the four countries. It includes a special section with comparative data on the wages of immigrants, presented here for the first time. The opening chapter is followed by the four country reviews. All four country chapters start with an overview of the framework for integration, before providing in-depth analysis of some key issues. The findings shed light on important questions such as the impact of naturalisation on labour market outcomes, the role of the public sector, the design of introduction programmes, the impact of active labour market policy, and the discounting by employers of foreign qualifications.

In all four countries, mainstream labour market services bear the main responsibility for the labour market integration of immigrants, but are complemented by additional services and programmes, directly or indirectly targeted to immigrants and their children. Often, these are embedded in a broader effort to integrate disadvantaged groups in the labour market – the diversity policies in Belgium (and in the Netherlands in the past) and the programmes targeting “sensitive urban areas” in France are examples of such a strategy.

Three of the countries covered in this volume – Belgium, France and the Netherlands – are longstanding countries of immigration that now attach special attention not only to new arrivals and resident migrants, but also to their children. Successful outcomes for the latter group are arguably the best benchmark for the long-term success of integration policy. Results, however, show that the labour market outcomes for the children of immigrants are unfavourable when compared with the children of natives, even after controlling for their generally lower educational attainment. Early intervention policies seem to have the best return, showing that integration policy is above all an investment in the future. In contrast to the other three countries, Portugal has a more

recent experience with large-scale immigration, providing it with the possibility of taking a fresh look at the issue of integration. As a result, it has taken an innovative approach to welcoming and providing services to immigrants. Each of the country reviews concludes with a summary and recommendations.

This publication was prepared by the Non-Member Economies and International Migration (NEIM) Division in the OECD Directorate for Employment, Labour, and Social Affairs (DELSA). The principal authors are Thomas Liebig and Georges Lemaitre.

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