Favouring the Economic Integration of Young People with Immigrant Backgrounds

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The integration of young people with immigrant backgrounds1 and residents of disadvantaged neighbourhoods2 is inhibited by difficulties that appear concentrated around employment, education and housing, and are particularly marked for certain population groups – children with two immigrant parents, descendants of African immigrants, and young men.

In large part, these difficulties reflect the socio-economic situation of these young people, who are particularly vulnerable to the dysfunctions of our social and republican model: difficulties entering the labour market for young people, especially for those with few skills; academic success predicated on social origin, with a high number of dropouts; fragmentation and lack of fluidity in the housing market, hindering mobility; weak anti-discrimination policies. Improving their economic integration calls for, above all, a response based on ordinary-law policies.

However, a significant part of the deficiencies observed for young people not directly descended from immigrants cannot be explained by conventional sociodemographic variables: all things being equal, a descendant of two immigrant parents or a resident of a disadvantaged neighbourhood is in a worse situation than other people in France, as a result of his immigration background or place of residence.

This observation argues for stronger and better-coordinated ordinary-law policies – concerning employment, education, housing and the fight against discrimination – especially at the local level, supplemented by specific policies to restore true equality for all citizens.

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2. See the reports by ONZUS, Observatoire national des zones urbaines sensibles (www.onzus.fr), known as Observatoire national de la politique de la ville (National observatory of urban policy) since 29 January 2015.
**INTRODUCTION**

The accumulation of difficulties encountered by the descendants of immigrants and by the residents of disadvantaged neighbourhoods justifies specific measures designed to remove objective barriers, but also to respond to the perceptions they create (discouragement, discrimination and relegation).

Some of the observed gaps are rooted in discriminatory practices, as confirmed by experiments using “testing” techniques; such discrimination principally affects descendants of immigrants, but also affects residents of ZUS (zone urbaine sensible, sensitive urban zone), including those not directly descended from immigrants. We must combat these discriminatory practices, regardless of whether they are due to intentional conduct.

Beyond policies targeting disadvantaged areas – essential but insufficient – it is imperative to revise ordinary-law policies so they provide equal benefits for residents of these neighbourhoods and to create more focused measures, providing professional and social prospects for all.

The proposals presented here are not intended to be exhaustive3, but they illustrate some possibilities in the four major areas identified – education, employment, housing and the fight against discrimination – to coordinate three types of measures: reinforced ordinary-law policies, specific measures for people in priority neighbourhoods and measures targeting immigrants and their descendants. This Note d’analyse’s emphasis on children and their education is explained by the fact that most inequality takes hold during that period, preceding their integration into the labour market.

**CHILDHOOD AND EDUCATION**

Multiple difficulties hinder the academic destinies of descendants of immigrants and children living in priority neighbourhoods: linguistic problems, de facto social and ethnic segmentation, in numerous schools with teaching staff less experienced and less stable than elsewhere, the orientation they are given, lack of information on careers and training courses, etc. Several levels of response are needed to address these difficulties: we must innovate to transform the system in depth, but also better support students and their parents.

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3. In particular, they do not address the central issue of restoring security in priority neighbourhoods.
to this objective of social diversity and be encouraged to set up schools in priority neighbourhoods.

The CNESCO (Conseil national de l’évaluation du système scolaire, National council to evaluate the school system) is carrying out international comparisons and organising decentralised, brainstorming groups on this issue.

**Should Additional Support Be Targeted for Descendants of Immigrants?**

Some OECD countries (Ireland, Germany and Finland) have developed policies for education and for combatting backwardness at school that explicitly target students with immigrant backgrounds. In Germany, several measures of the National Integration Plan, developed in 2007, specifically address the education of young people with immigrant backgrounds: creating a national network of educational sponsors for tutoring programmes, promoting language skills in day care centers, evaluating language level before children enter school, funding language tutoring in all schools and at all levels, granting specific funds to schools with a high percentage of students with immigrant backgrounds, strengthening links between the school and parents of immigrant families, etc.

France has not implemented measures specifically designed for students born in France of immigrant backgrounds, regardless of their generation, even though figures show disturbing differences: of ten boys with African or North African parents, four leave school without a diploma. The relevance of such tools should be studied, based on assessments of programmes conducted abroad.

**Provide Better Support for Children and Their Parents Throughout the School Career**

**Focus on Language Learning from the Very Beginning**

The development of pre-school programmes for children, starting at two years of age, “in priority for schools located in a disadvantaged social environment,” announced as a key element of school reform, must continue. If the effect of schooling at two years is rather limited for the general population, studies (already dated) show it provides significant benefits for foreign students or those with immigrant backgrounds.

Additionally, collective childcare structures, as provided for by the target agreement between the State and the *Caisse nationale des allocations familiales* (National family allowance fund), should be developed in priority neighbourhoods, which implies a rapid generalisation of the territorial action plans for family services. This quantitative development must be accompanied by the implementation in nurseries, as well as in other services dedicated to early childhood (parent/child reception centres, maternal and child protection centres, childminder services, libraries for youth) of early learning programmes focused on children’s linguistic and cognitive enrichment, and intervention concerning the factors of non-use of these services via social mediation and parent participation actions, particularly targeting inactive parents.

**Open Schools to Parents**

Schools must provide a better welcome system for parents, without paternalism, but seeking to build relationships that can create the mutual trust indispensable for educational success. To prevent schooling difficulties, parents must, starting with pre-school, understand the school, its operation, its constraints and what it teaches. Also, teachers must better understand the diversity of parental situations. Multiple approaches could be considered: specific time dedicated to reception of parents, schools open more systematically during class time, occasional participation of parents in the classroom or even in tutoring, support for parents to help children learning basic skills, weekly parent-child recreation periods led by an educator, meetings for collective exchange between parents and the pedagogical team throughout the year, etc. It also seems desirable to generalise support operations for immigrant parents, such as those promoted by the national programme *Ouvrir l’école aux parents pour réussir l’intégration* (Open the school to parents for successful integration): a “school for parents” that offers literacy classes, courses in French as a foreign language, information modules explaining how the school works and providing orientation, the exercise of citizenship, use of computers, etc.

These initiatives are designed to simultaneously promote the parents’ economic and social integration (especially for mothers) and the children’s educational process.

**Strengthen and Stabilise the Teams Involved with Priority Education**

To ensure greater stability of teaching teams and promote the construction of medium-term educational projects, it is important to give teachers more encouragement to join the priority education networks (REP and REP +, *Réseaux d’éducation prioritaire*) and to remain there longer. In addition
to financial incentives, already in place, other approaches are relevant: predicate advancement to higher career grades (GRAF, or even hors-classe) on having served for a minimum time in priority education, or guarantee experienced teachers who are motivated by a project, and who work in REP or REP+ for a substantial period of time, the ability to regain their former position.

The quality of teaching conditions is also a key issue to make priority education attractive: the planned investments mentioned above must contribute to that quality, and the presence of adults in priority institutions must be increased, for example by the systematic use of civic service volunteers who would assist the educational team and complement the new réserve citoyenne citizen involvement programme.

Increase Awareness of Courses of Study and Vocations

The new parcours individuel d’information, d’orientation et de découverte du monde économique et professionnel (individual programme for information, guidance and discovery of the economic and professional world) must be urgently implemented as a priority in the REP and REP+ lower secondary schools. Companies must become involved in educational institutions, provide examples of successful educational careers and furnish internships allowing students farthest from the employment networks to discover the professional world. Partnerships with lycées des métiers (vocational upper secondary schools) could also be established or strengthened in order to raise awareness of various professional or technological career paths and help ensure that orientation choices are better informed.

EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING

The specific employability difficulties experienced by certain young descendants of immigrants call for responses on two levels. First, targeted measures should facilitate access to employment for residents of priority neighbourhoods. Second, the range of ordinary-law policies should be reviewed and broadened to specifically benefit people with immigrant backgrounds and residents of priority neighbourhoods. An example is correction of the shortcomings in qualifications and diversification in recruitment for the civil service. The State must thus set a faultless example for the private sector.

Several measures could be taken: strengthening school-work exchange in both private and public sectors, and making it more attractive; having the State meet its responsibilities to employ youth from priority neighbourhoods; and finally, better adapt the emplois francs (jobs for youths from ZUS) system to the current functioning of the labour market.

Facilitate Access to Employment for Young People in Priority Neighbourhoods

Ordinary-law policies must be mobilised to promote the integration of descendants of immigrants, particularly in terms of State-subsidised contracts. This could be achieved by establishing targeted objectives. Thus, the convention for les quartiers prioritaires agreement on priority neighbourhoods for 2013-2015 sets a target of 30% of young people from these neighbourhoods entering the emplois d’avenir measure (State-subsidised jobs). To achieve this, the more flexible access conditions for residents of priority areas having at least a bac + 3 level (secondary school + 3 years) could be extended to age 30 (from the current age of 25).

This also would involve strengthening the public employment service in these areas, to ensure the effective implementation of ordinary-law rights (right to education, access to contrats d’avenir (State-subsidised jobs), geographic mobility assistance for job applicants, operational preparedness for individual employment, etc.).

Review the Conditions of Eligibility for Emplois Francs

Residents of priority neighbourhoods have a lower probability of access to employment, all things being equal, justifying the existence of specific programmes to offset this disadvantage. Therefore, new experiments with the emplois francs programme could be conducted, with eligibility conditions reviewed to provide maximum benefits. First, the programme should be limited to the least qualified residents (without secondary diploma) to avoid negative effects on those with a higher level of education: next, authorising recruitment with fixed-term contracts (CDD) to better meet the operating conditions of the labour market. Assistance to employers benefiting from this system would thus increase depending on the duration of the employment contract.

7. Established by the loi d’orientation et de programmation pour la refondation de l’école (orientation and programming law to revise education) of 8 July 2013, this educational programme is now being developed in the REP and under the leadership of the Conseil national éducation-économie (CNEE, National Council for Education and Economy).
8. Following the example of monstageenligne.fr, developed by Onisep.
9. Tested starting in 2013, the emplois francs programme was based on €5,000 of support paid to the company that gave a permanent position to a young person (16-30 years old who had been living in a ZUS for at least six months. Fewer than 300 contracts were signed.
10. In 2013, 83.6% of new hires were with fixed-term contracts; this rate has been increasing continuously for fifteen years. For those under 25, the figure is 86.4%. See Dares, « Les mouvements de main-d’œuvre en 2013. Forte augmentation des entrées en CDD dans le tertiaire ». http://travelemploi.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/2014-094.pdf.
An independent assessment of this experiment should be planned from its inception, to measure its impact on access to employment for people in priority neighbourhoods and to measure any positive effects.

**Extend the Clauses Territoriales to All Public Investment**

The *clauses territoriales* (measures providing that contractors on public projects allocate a certain number of hours of work to residents of priority neighbourhoods) planned for projects funded by the ANRU (*Agence nationale pour la rénovation urbaine*, National urban renewal agency)\(^{11}\) could be extended to all public actors (local authorities, operators, etc.) for all public procurement exceeding €90,000 excluding taxes, and their extension to other forms of intervention (public service contracts, public-private partnerships, subsidies) should be studied. This would provide significant leverage, given the amounts involved (€60 to 100 billion per year, depending on the scope of public investments concerned, according to the *Observatoire de l’achat public* (Observatory on public procurement)). This assumes strengthening the intermediation process between residents, businesses and local public employment services. Shared structures such as *Structures d’insertion par l’activité économique* (SIAE, structures for insertion by economic activity) could be used to organise the job offers.\(^{12}\)

**Encourage Private Firms and the Civil Service to Hire in Workplace Training Youths from Priority Neighbourhoods**

Private sector companies could be encouraged to reach their quota of young people in workplace training (5% since January 1, 2015) by hiring those from priority neighbourhoods, by providing increased incentive payments or by giving young people increased weighting in the calculation of objectives. In addition, the government could negotiate numeric objectives with the professional sector, professional associations or local employment networks, concerning the number of residents of priority neighbourhoods in training or professionalisation contracts. Reinforced tutoring or sponsorship could also help young people find internships or work-study contracts, and remain with them.

In the public sector, we propose reserving, within the 10,000 apprenticeship positions planned by 2016 in the State civil service (including operators), a percentage for young people from priority neighbourhoods and including a target for recruitment from these neighbourhoods in the agreements between the State and its operators.

**Strengthen Ordinary-Law Policies**

**Develop Workplace Training and Diversify the Recruitment in the Civil Service**

Apprenticeships in the public sector, particularly at State level, is currently quite underdeveloped, while it is a privileged means of employment integration: only 12,000 youths apprenticeships were enumerated in 2012, of whom 90% were in the local government service. To promote apprenticeships and diversify recruitment across the three civil service categories, two measures could be considered:

- gradually introducing a minimum number of youth apprenticeships in each civil service, similar to what exists in the private sector, with convergence between private and public sectors, over 10 years, of obligations and incentive measures (bonuses and penalties);
- developing a specific access method in the form of a professional examination for young people with few skills who received an apprenticeships contract, recognising their prior work experience.

Additionally, the opening of public jobs now closed to non-European long-term residents could be studied. This measure would help send a message to the wide range of people who reside in France\(^{13}\) that the public sphere is open to them. It would also promote their children’s access to the civil service, increasing their probability of following the parents’ career path.\(^{14}\) In 2009, the HALDE (*Haute Autorité de lutte contre les discriminations et pour l’égalité*, High authority against discrimination and for equality) had proposed the systematic removal of these barriers, with the exception of jobs related to national sovereignty or the exercise of public authority, which are reserved for French nationals.

**Make the CPF the Basis for a Right to a Second Chance**

The *Compte personnel de formation* (CPF, personal training account) should become the lever for a genuine right to a second chance for everyone, especially those with the lowest levels of education. The account’s initial level of funding must therefore be varied according to the individual’s needs. Thus, the CPF for those with the lowest levels of

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11. The *Charte nationale d’insertion* (national integration charter), adopted by the ANRU in 2005, plans to dedicate at least 5% of the hours worked to the professional integration of residents of ZUS in the framework of urban renewal projects.
12. The 2013 IGAS-IGF report *Le financement de l’insertion par l’activité économique* considers social clauses in public procurement to be a support lever for the activities of the SIAEs that it seeks to develop.
education - among whom residents of priority neighbourhoods are over-represented - would be funded with extra training hours. These allocations would be inversely proportional to an individual’s level of qualification when he leaves the initial training system, with a fixed amount for those who are illiterate, allowing them to access training specifically designed for the acquisition of basic knowledge and skills.  

These allocations should be accompanied by specific information and support actions concerning the use of this account, in the framework of the public employment service, public orientation service or the company, via the social partners. For the younger generations, Defence and citizenship day (JDC, Journée Défense et Citoyenneté) could be a tool for identifying illiteracy and orienting individuals towards appropriate training.

**HOUSING AND MOBILITY**

One obstacle to social diversity and employment is due to the high concentration of poor people and people with immigrant backgrounds in certain neighbourhoods. Beyond actions concerning the operation of schools or access to employment, it seems desirable to increase social diversity.

*A Better Distribution of Social Housing in the Territory*

Beyond the full implementation of existing laws, particularly with regard to financial penalties and preemption by the Préfet in case of failure, several possibilities should be considered:

- transferring responsibility for social housing policy to *communautés de communes ou d’agglomération* (groupings of neighbouring municipalities) in order to promote a more balanced distribution of social housing in the area;
- introducing a minimum proportion of social housing, from which municipalities could not be exempted by payment of a penalty, and a maximum proportion, beyond which new social housing programmes would not be funded in the municipality;
- applying the principles of the SRU (urban renewal) law at district level in Paris, Lyon and Marseille, and testing the *Conseil d’analyse économique* (Council for economic analysis) proposal to reserve public subsidies for projects reducing spatial segregation, measured by a transparent indicator at agglomeration (metropolitan area) level.

**Increase Social Diversity in Social Housing**

Better distribution of social housing among municipalities would be of limited value if the terms of obtaining or retaining housing tend to reproduce a level of segregation there. To increase social diversity in social housing, two types of action are needed.

First, criteria for allocating social housing must be made consistent and objective, with the centralisation of some procedures, as practiced in the Rennes metropolitan area: centralisation of social housing applications from the 38 municipalities concerned, social landlords and Action Logement (a community group); ranking these applications against a single grid integrating economic and social criteria and waiting time; commitment of all landlords to accept applications ranked in this way and to reserve 30% of their housing for people considered a priority by the *Plan départemental d’action pour le logement des personnes défavorisées* (departmental action plan for housing the disadvantaged).

Second, rent setting methods must be modified to better reflect the current revenue of the occupants, rather than primarily reflecting the initial conditions of the housing’s financing. In particular, this would help diversify the living conditions within each building by setting the rent based on the revenue of the household that is to be accommodated when housing becomes available.

**ANTI-DISCRIMINATION ACTIONS**

Stronger political support and heightened media visibility for the fight against discrimination are imperative, and must be supported by three types of action: better measuring discrimination and successfully formulating incentive goals (targets) for integration of descendants of immigrants; ensuring greater effectiveness for laws; increasing funding for experiments concerning support for people subject to discrimination to find employment and housing.

*Measuring Trajectories and Discrimination*

Improving statistical data concerning the situation of descendants of immigrants is both a prerequisite and an action lever. Initially, this would provide contextual data that is more comprehensive and easier to employ. In compliance with French law, and without recourse to an “ethno-racial” classification, it would be advantageous, at minimum, for census surveys to include questions on

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16. The law of 18 January 2013 increased municipal targets for social housing from 20% to 25% and opened the possibility of a five-fold increase in penalties for violators.

parents’ native country18 (and perhaps their nationality at birth), as proposed in 2010 by the Comité de mesure et d’évaluation de la diversité et des discriminations (Committee to measure and evaluate diversity and discrimination). Similarly, more information on academic, professional and residential trajectories at a rather precise territorial level, coupled with information on geographic origin, would allow better identification of links between neighbourhood effects or geographic effects, professional and geographic mobility and trends in population concentration. The objectives are to provide reliable local data (especially to allow the conduct of territorial level analyses), to better measure differences in integration, assist in the design of remedial measures and assess their impact.

Another issue is to disseminate available data and data that may be collected in the future: an annual report collecting information concerning the situation of descendants of immigrants, including an analysis of discrimination and led by an adequate institution (perhaps the Défenseur des Droits (Human right Defender)) would be a reference point.

Further, while the national interprofessional agreement (Accord national interprofessionnel, ANI) on diversity (12 October 2006) aims to promote equal treatment and opportunities by mobilising corporate actors and targets “ethnic, cultural and social” diversity, it is remarkable that agreements made with businesses in this framework address other categories of the public (women, seniors, disabled workers) in priority, rather than those for which they were designed (immigrants and descendants of immigrants).19 Companies and associations already involved in these efforts emphasize the drawbacks: a legal framework perceived as insufficiently secure and interventions made difficult by the absence of voluntary diagnostic instruments. While the term “diversity” veils the objective of these efforts, the modalities for establishing diagnoses or comparative status reports as well as targeted action plans on the status of immigrants and descendants of immigrants in businesses should be clarified and better distributed. If the consequences of discrimination – in terms of unequal treatment – are very clearly defined, the reasons behind it remain a subject of debate.20 In addition to a phenomenon of intentional or “racist” discrimination, recent work has found that social problems fuel stereotypes and negative perceptions associated with certain groups; this seems particularly true in the case of young men from African immigrant backgrounds exposed to forms of “statistical discrimination.”

**Ensure that the Law is More Effective**

**Expand and Publicise the Practice of “Testing”**

One course of action is to increase the use of testing techniques to objectivise practices in employment, housing and access to various services (e.g. health). These testing programmes should cover both private and public structures. They could be accompanied by a procedure to publicise good and bad practices (“name and shame”).

**Take Class Action When Discrimination Occurs**

On the punitive side, France already has a significant legislative and regulatory arsenal. Its effectiveness must be increased by better identifying discriminatory practices and facilitating their prosecution in court. Class action can also be lever to fight discrimination21 in access to goods, services and employment, and on the job: the possibility for actors involved in the fight against discrimination (associations and trade unions) to ask for judgments, improved accessibility for judicial response (sharing of legal costs), facilitating the proof of discriminatory facts (in the presence of similar cases).

**Increase Support When Seeking Employment and Housing, as Well as After Securing Them**

In any case, overcoming discrimination means completing these actions with another level of intervention. In particular, an entirely repressive approach can push recruiters and owners towards the hidden job and rental markets (unpublished listings) and to co-opting. The solution is to support and increase sponsorship actions in the field of employment and risk guarantees for renters. Convincing experiments have already been carried out. In the field of employment, they cover mediation approaches, sponsorship, tutoring, involvement of third parties (often associative), including local missions.22 They must be supported and more clearly oriented towards the descendants of immigrants. Similarly, in the area of housing, the Solibail renting solidarity initiative (and its local variations), guaranteed by the State and managed by approved associations, provides a secure framework for owners, subletting and rental intermediation, facilitating access to housing; renters become subtenants of the association.

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18. Information on the first generation (immigrants) and the second (their children or direct descendants) is already present in official statistics.
19. Économie et statistique, April.
21. In particular, in line with the findings of the Pécaut-Rivolier report (2013).
22. The conclusion, notably, of the guide Vers l’emploi, mais pas tout seul, copublished in 2010 by trade unions, employers and associations.
CONCLUSION

The proposals gathered here do not cover the entire range of measures that should be taken to improve the integration of young people with immigrant backgrounds and residents of priority neighbourhoods, but they show that a proactive direction can be taken in education, employment, housing and the fight against discrimination.

In particular, the proposals must have strong political support and be complemented by initiatives to fight difficulties of other natures, including the insecurity concentrated in certain neighbourhoods, a pervasive shadow economy, imbalances in territorial coverage of public services and local clientelism that does not promote emancipation.

Clearly, economic integration must be accompanied by real political integration. Measures to reduce discrimination against descendants of immigrants and residents of priority neighbourhoods will have greater chances of implementation and success if they are accompanied by policies that reinforce those people’s individual and collective participation in political life.23

Keywords: Immigrant, Youth, Young people, Inequality, Social integration, Economic integration, Discrimination, Segregation