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Introduction to the Thematic Series: Use and consequences of family policies among migrants and their descendants in Europe

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Abstract

This article is the introduction to the Thematic Series *Use and consequences of family policies among migrants and their descendants in Europe*. The study contexts are countries in different Western European regions: Belgium, France, Germany, and Italy. Despite their differences with respect to welfare-state types in general and family policies in particular, these countries also vary when it comes to their immigration histories and current migrant populations. Yet, the fast-growing field of research on the effects of family policies on family and fertility behavior as well as work-family reconciliation has virtually overlooked migrants. To address this void in the existing literature, this Thematic Series raises two research questions: To what degree do family policies include, and are used by, migrants and their descendants? And, to what extent do such policies promote migrants' integration into European societies? The collection contains six empirical articles investigating either eligibility or use and consequences of two specific family policy measures: parental leave and external childcare. Collectively, the studies show significant disadvantages among migrant groups in eligibility for family policy measures, and consequently in their use and impacts on further life-course patterns, compared to majority populations. They also demonstrate diverging patterns within migrant populations.

Introduction

This Thematic Series seeks to answer the crucial questions of how migrants and their descendants in Europe are integrated—or not—in the family policies of their respective destination countries, and to what extent they make use of these policy measures. Family policies play a pivotal role in social welfare, primarily aiming to alleviate poverty and balance financial strains faced by families with children (Castro-García & Pazos-Moran, 2016). They provide subsidies, tax relief, and other fiscal assistance while facilitating a reconciliation between work and family life (Maume, 2016). The specifics of family policies include regulations on, for instance, parental leave, flexible or reduced work hours, or external/public childcare provision—all measures that respond to working parents'

needs and promote gender equality (Duvander et al., 2019; Nylin et al., 2021), with some considerable variations across European countries. At the same time, these policies can further enhance early childhood education, which is essential for lifelong learning and skill acquisition (Spieß, 2017; Attanasio et al., 2022). Given their scope, scholars have shown significant interest in studying the impacts of family policies on various outcomes (Moreno Minguez et al., 2022). For instance, research has been conducted into their effects on fertility behaviors (Dimai, 2023; Lee et al., 2016), labor market attachment (Haan & Wrohlich, 2011), or gender equality in the private sphere, such as within households (Castro-Garzia & Pazos-Moran 2016).

The specific design of family policies, however, differs significantly across Western European welfare states. It may show more generosity in one context than another, including or excluding specific population segments (Dobrotić & Blum, 2020). These policies may considerably impact fertility (Duvander & Andersson, 2006; Neyer & Andersson, 2008) and labor market participation (Bergemann & Riphahn, 2010; Scherer & Pavolini, 2023), and might interact—or interfere—with other social policies, notably those targeting migrant populations (Bonjour & Kraler, 2016). Thus, the effects of family policies may differ among social groups, particularly impacting international migrants and their descendants (Lancker & Pavolini, 2023). The patterns of lower maternal employment, high early fertility, and the gender-based division of work among some migrant populations in Western Europe prompt questions about family policy uptake and their distinct impacts on migrant groups (Milewski & Adserà, 2023).

Previous research in demography and family sociology has primarily focused on cross-country comparisons based on studies of majority, non-migrant populations (with the notable exceptions of Naldini et al., 2022; Van Lancker & Pavolini, 2023). Yet, this research practice neglects the population diversity resulting from long-standing immigration and the growth of migrant or ethnic minority groups in European countries. Today, after about 70 years of extensive immigration, a substantial portion of Europe's population is of international migrant origin. The migrant population has also become increasingly diverse in regard to legal status, religion, language, and other aspects—a phenomenon referred to as “super-diversity” (Vertovec, 2007).

The motivation driving this Thematic Series is the need to understand how family policies include or exclude international migrants and their descendants, and how they impact their fertility, work-family reconciliation, and early childhood development (Moreno Minguez et al., 2022). The current scarcity of academic interest in the relationship between family policies and migrants' integration is puzzling, especially considering the extensive focus on other dimensions of migrant integration such as structural, social, and cultural factors (Milewski & Adserà, 2023). The idea that family policies can foster the integration of migrants into their receiving societies, and that differing policy eligibility might shape their future behaviors, is not at all far-fetched. For instance, Andersson et al. (2006) found that the introduction of the so-called “speed premium” into the Swedish parental leave system during the 1980s led native-born women to shorten the intervals between births, while in contrast migrant women did not exhibit a similar shift in behavior. The age at arrival and the duration of exposure to the host country's norms can significantly affect migrants' integration and consequently influence their future demographic behavior (Adserà et al., 2012). Yet, even today, there remains

limited documentation on how different migrant groups may respond to family policies and their evolution over time. This Thematic Series draws attention to this overlooked aspect of social policy analysis. The collection pursues two overarching research questions: *First, to what degree do family policies include, and are used by, migrants and their descendants? Second, to what extent do such policies promote their integration into European societies?*

Within this context, it is paramount to clarify our choice of terminology. We opt for the term “integration” over alternatives like “assimilation” or “adaptation”. This decision is not merely semantic; it is rooted in our research focus on exploring the differential effects of family policies on migrants vs. the majority population. In choosing “integration” we acknowledge that the incorporation of migrants into a new society is not a responsibility that rests solely on their own shoulders. Rather, it is significantly influenced by the destination country’s policies and ethos. Our stance aligns with the European Commission’s perspective, which frames integration as a “two-way process”, thus emphasizing the mutual obligations and shared responsibilities (European Commission 2003). This “two-way” descriptor encapsulates a reciprocal process, whereby both migrant and host society play roles in the integration journey. Therefore, our choice of the term “integration” more precisely captures this mutual and multidirectional engagement, making it the most fitting term for our research objectives.

The geographic scope of this Thematic Series comprises EU migrant-receiving countries. This choice was mainly related to the notion that particularly countries in the western part of Europe perceive themselves as welfare states, despite their far-reaching differences in terms of policies targeting poverty alleviation as well as social and gender equality (Esping-Andersen, 1990; Korpi, 2000). The Western European context in fact provides a good research foundation for cross-country variation in terms of different family policies as well as immigration histories. Five out of the six articles in this Thematic Series, as single-country studies, illustrate different examples of welfare state systems and migration histories. The other article provides a cross-country empirical reflection, drawing general conclusions on the use and consequences of family policies among recent migrants.

Family policy dimensions: parental leave and early childhood education and care

In this Thematic Series, we focus on two central dimensions of family policies: parental leave and early childhood education and care (ECEC) policies. Parental leave policies are pivotal in promoting mothers’ workforce engagement, encouraging fathers’ involvement in early childcare, and contributing to gender equality in the family (Castro-Garzia & Pazos-Moran, 2016; Duvander & Andersson, 2006; Duvander et al., 2019; Nylin et al., 2021). While prior research on parental leave use among migrants and their descendants is limited, it does indicate that migrant groups exhibit a lower uptake of parental leave, as seen in Kil et al. (2018) in the context of Belgium. Nevertheless, when migrant mothers increase their length of stay in the host country and improve their labor market position, their parental leave habits tend to mirror those of native-born mothers—as shown for Sweden by Mussino and Duvander (2016). This pattern was echoed in research on migrant fathers in Sweden, who use parental leave less frequently than

their Swedish-born counterparts (Mussino et al., 2018). Economic integration—that is, patterns of labor market attachment—primarily drive these disparities among both men and women. However, a major unanswered question is how different national contexts affect not only uptake behavior but also eligibility for parental leave policies, especially among newly arrived migrants. Duvander and Koslowski (2023)—in this Thematic Series) investigate the accessibility of such policies for newly arrived migrants, a group transitioning between different countries and thus also social systems. So far, very few studies (e.g. Andersson et al., 2006 on Sweden) have examined whether a change in family policies affects the behavior of parents who belong to a migrant group in a way similar to its effect among the majority population. Duvander and Mussino (2023) showed significant disparities by country of origin in the use of parental leave among newly arrived mothers in Sweden and the effect on different future outcomes (e.g. having another child, re-emigrating, being employed). However, this study focuses only on migrant mothers of children born abroad. In a longitudinal analysis of over three decades, Milewski and Brehm (2023)—in this Thematic Series) examined the potential disparities between migrants and their descendants compared to non-migrants in their transitions after becoming a mother in Germany with respect to (re-)entry into employment or having a second child, with several changes in the country's parental leave policies having been made since the reunification of East and West Germany.

The second “policy” studied in this Thematic Series is ECEC. Access to ECEC is pivotal for both parents and children. For parents, particularly mothers, it facilitates participation in the labor market, fostering a more gender-equal dynamic within households (Haan & Wrohlich, 2011; Mateo Diaz & Rodriguez-Chamussy, 2013). For children, childcare outside the child's home is essential as it positively influences cognitive development and language acquisition, thereby directly affecting their future prospects (e.g. Corazzini et al., 2021). Therefore, access to formal childcare is especially crucial for migrant children, as it provides an early intervention for children who are at risk of educational impoverishment and social exclusion (Van Lancker & Pavolini, 2023). Existing studies frequently show a negative link between migrant background or ethnicity and childcare use (Jessen et al., 2020; Lancker & Pavolini, 2023). In the US, research has consistently revealed that Black and Hispanic infants and toddlers are less likely to be enrolled in formal childcare than their White peers, regardless of their parents' economic status (Early & Burchinal, 2001; Miller et al., 2013). Although there is limited quantitative research in Europe, the available studies highlight that reduced participation in ECEC often correlates with socioeconomic challenges, such as residing in disadvantaged neighborhoods, low family income, or parental unemployment. Thus, the use of childcare facilities by migrant women is partially connected to class-based family resources (Barglowski & Pustulka, 2018; Frazer et al., 2020; Jensen, 2010; Karoly & Gonzalez, 2011; Zachrisson et al., 2013). Migrants often contend with challenges like language barriers, intricate bureaucracies, and limited tenure in host countries, contributing to reducing childcare enrolment rates (Frazer et al., 2020; Karoly & Gonzales, 2011). Cultural norms emphasizing home-based care, prevalent in both origin and host countries, can further deter childcare use (Barglowski & Pustulka, 2018). Moreover, structural hindrances, including limited accessibility and high costs, affect both native and migrant families' childcare service utilization (Van Lancker & Pavolini, 2023). Our Thematic Series

contributes to the literature on childcare use through three articles that pursue different approaches and focus on different migrant populations and migrant generations in different European migrant receiving countries: Eremenko and Unterreiner (2023)—in this Thematic Series) examined the patterns of ECEC enrolment among parents belonging to recent migrant populations in France who have children under the age of 3 years, while Mussino and Ortensi (2023)—in this Thematic Series) investigated the influence of parental age at arrival on variations in childcare use among migrants in Italy, in comparison to the native population. Previous research has identified a gap in the use of formal childcare services between migrant and native families across European countries, with migrants generally using these services less (Biegel et al., 2021; Schober & Spiess, 2013; Schmitz et al., 2023). Despite these findings, however, longitudinal studies exploring the relationship between local childcare availability and differences in uptake based on migration background have been scarce. Maes et al. (2023—in this Thematic Series) focused on formal childcare uptake among mothers of the second migrant generation in Belgium, studying the role of the expansions in childcare availability within municipalities during the period 2010–2014. Perhaps unsurprisingly, most existing studies on family policy uptake have focused primarily on families with very young children (0–3 years old). This likely reflects the fact that in many countries, preschool education is widely available for children starting around age 3 or 4. However, this approach has a significant limitation as it excludes a vital discussion on childcare arrangements for older children (3+), and its relative impact on maternal participation in the labor market or the gendered patterns of childcare within households over time. The article by Trappolini et al., (2023)—in this Thematic Series) addresses this research gap, examining the role of migrant status in determining diverse patterns of informal childcare arrangements for children up to age 13 living in Italy.

In summary, this Thematic Series aims to examine the extent to which migrants and their descendants make use of family policies (e.g. parental leave or formal childcare) compared to the non-migrant majority population. It sheds light on the reasons for differential uptake, particularly on the disadvantages related to precarious labor market trajectories, participation in informal childcare, different gender norms, and more “traditional” family structures. It reflects on the consequences on subsequent outcomes, for instance fertility and maternal employment.

The Thematic series “use and consequences of family policies among migrants and their descendants in Europe”

Ann-Zofie Duvander & Alison Koslowski compare parental leave policies available to recently arrived migrant parents in several European countries with tiered systems of parental leave entitlement and relatively large migrant populations (Belgium, Germany, Italy, Spain, Sweden, and the UK). The authors offer a thorough overview of national policies based on information provided by the “International Review of Leave Policies and Related Research 2021” database. Their findings indicate that parental leave policies available to recent migrants differ in terms of eligibility and entitlement across these countries, based on residence and payments to health or social insurance, and depending on the duration of employment. The generosity in benefits is different for migrants compared to other parents in a specific country. Overall, their analysis suggests that

recently arrived migrants are more likely to be recipients of the lower levels of benefits available in a given country, which also means that their access to parental leave benefits is more likely to be gendered. The article by Duvander & Koslowski concludes with recommendations for policy-makers, arguing that family policies and particularly parental leave measures should specifically address the needs of recently arrived migrants.

Nadja Milewski & Uta Brehm utilize data from the “German Socio-Economic Panel (GSOEP)” from 1992 to 2020 to examine the transition of first-time mothers to paid labor or to having a second child, comparing patterns of those with and without a migrant background. Importantly, their study highlights differences across migrant generations and regions of origin, rather than making a simplistic division between migrants and non-migrants. In accordance with the literature, smaller differentials were found between migrant descendants and non-migrants compared to the first migrant generation, indicating improved structural integration across generations. By contrast, the transition rates to a second child—before (re-)entering work—decreased slightly among non-migrants. To some extent, the migrant differential could be explained by socioeconomic characteristics, highlighting the significant role of migrant selectivity and the different compositions of the respective population segments. Importantly, however, differentials by migrant background have increased in recent policy periods, which is likely related to the incentive to return to the labor market affecting non-migrants more than migrants. This finding can be interpreted as indicating policies contributing to a widening gap between migrants and non-migrants in economic integration.

Tatiana Eremenko & Anne Unterreiner draw our attention to the use of ECEC among newly arrived migrants in the major districts of France. They use the “Longitudinal Survey on the Integration of First-time Arrivals” (ELIPA 2) carried out among third-country nationals receiving a first residence permit in 2018, and analyze patterns of ECEC enrolment among children under the age of 3 years. Their results show that ECEC enrolment is lower in the migrant group than in the general population. This gap can be explained by individual and contextual factors: these migrant families have a more disadvantaged socioeconomic position in France, particularly lower employment rates and thus lower income. At the same time, they more often live in neighborhoods with fewer public childcare services. The findings by Eremenko & Unterreiner provide evidence on the obstacles faced by families of recently arrived migrants in a specific institutional framework. However, there is also some variation in ECEC use within this group by family migration patterns and country of origin.

Eleonora Mussino & Livia Ortensi compare childcare arrangements among mothers of the first and 1.5 generations to those of native-born mothers in Italy. Using the nationally representative “Birth Sample Survey 2012” conducted by the Italian National Institute of Statistics, they analyze the use of and need for formal childcare among children aged 0–3. Overall, migrant mothers in Italy use and need childcare less than native-born mothers. However, distinguishing between various types of childcare, their results suggest that when migrant mothers do use care they rely on formal care (daycare institutions) more often than their native-born counterparts do, which is in contrast to what has been found for other countries. However, the differences between migrant and native mothers can be explained, at least partly, by socioeconomic characteristics, such as labor market attachment. The patterns for the 1.5 generation lie between those of the

first migrant generation and Italian-born mothers. Structural barriers to formal childcare are another factor explaining the differences between migrant and native mothers. While logistic barriers explain the unmet need for formal daycare among first-generation mothers, economic barriers are more relevant among native mothers.

Julie Maes, Karel Neels, Naomi Biegel & Jonas Wood utilize longitudinal population data from censuses and registers to examine the extent to which the expansion of local childcare availability in Belgium from 2010 to 2014 affected migrant-native differences in childcare. They focus on households in which the mother belonged to the second migrant generation from Southern Europe, Maghreb, or Turkey, and had children aged 0–3. The results reveal that as childcare became more readily available within their municipalities, mothers of Southern European and Turkish origin were more likely to use formal childcare. However, the gap in uptake compared to native mothers persisted as the increased local childcare availability did not differentially impact these groups. In contrast, expansions in local childcare resulted in a marginally greater increase in formal childcare uptake among mothers of Maghreb origin compared to native mothers, leading to a slight reduction in the migrant-native uptake gap. Nevertheless, significant uptake gaps remain. Although this article does not aim to explore the mechanisms behind the uptake gap, it offers valuable insights by quantifying the potential changes in the uptake of formal childcare among parents from different migrant origin backgrounds.

Eleonora Trappolini, Laura Terzera, Stefania Rimoldi & Elisa Barbiano di Belgiojoso study informal childcare needs and arrangements in Italy for children up to age 13, distinguishing between Italians and migrants from various countries of origin. The authors merge two Italian surveys conducted by the Italian National Institute of Statistics in 2011–2012: the “Social Condition and Integration of Foreign Citizens”, a sample of households with at least one migrant with foreign citizenship, and “Multiscopo—Aspects of Daily Life”, a sample of households in Italy. Their results reveal differences in informal childcare need, with migrants having a lower need than Italians. Furthermore, childcare arrangements substantially differ between migrants and Italians, as the latter mainly rely on grandparental childcare support regardless of the age of their children. Moreover, household composition—distinguishing between couples, single parent families, and composite households—and parents’ employment status are crucial in explaining differences in informal childcare arrangements. Overall, migrants are less likely than Italians to use informal childcare options, particularly grandparents. If they use informal childcare, migrants rely mainly on other relatives and non-relatives, although familial childcare solutions are their preferred option.

Conclusions

The final section of this introductory chapter to our Thematic Series highlights selected aspects in relation to our overarching research questions and possible avenues for future research. Our study contexts are countries in different Western European regions: Belgium, France, Germany, and Italy. These countries show important variations with respect to welfare-state types in general and family policies in particular, and also vary regarding their immigration histories and the origins and composition of their migrant populations. Yet, the fast-growing field of research on the effects of family policies on family and fertility behavior, and work-family reconciliation, has virtually overlooked

migrants and their descendants. To fill this gap in the current literature, our Thematic Series posed two overarching research questions: *First, to what degree do family policies include, and are used by, migrants and their descendants? And, second, to what extent do such policies promote their integration into European societies?*

All the articles included here cover and bring together key stages in the life course: on the one hand, the phase of family formation and family life with young children, in which individuals facing simultaneous and overlapping pressures related to career advancement, raising children and, sometimes, caring for aging parents (also labelled the “rush hour of life” (Bertram & Bujard, 2012); and on the other hand, migration as a crucial life transition, in which the migration event interrelates with these family dynamics (Kulu & Milewski, 2007). In this phase, first-generation migrants are often subject to different types of policies, targeting family behavior and labor market participation as well as migration and settlement. Therefore, the emerging disadvantages may accumulate if such policies interfere or overlap with each other – even though family policies *per se* may not explicitly target or even omit certain groups of residents, such as migrants. Our Thematic Series looked into patterns of use and consequences of family policies that are in effect during this life phase that facilitate (or do not facilitate) work-family reconciliation as well as human-capital acquisition in early childhood, which also contributes to reducing—or increasing—social inequalities across the whole life course.

A first finding across the articles in this Thematic Series is the crucial role of different aspects of time and timing that are inherent in migrants’ integration process. The findings in our article collection show that migrant generation matters, as do age at arrival and duration of stay in the destination country—which is in line with previous research on fertility and female labor force participation among migrants (Milewski & Adserà, 2023). Differentials, which in fact are disadvantages in participation, are larger between first-generation migrants and the respective majority populations than among migrant descendants, as shown in the articles on (re-)entry into the labor market after having a first child in Germany (Milewski & Brehm—in this Thematic Series) and on child-care patterns in Italy (Mussino & Ortensi—in this Thematic Series). On the one hand, shrinking disparities in socioeconomic achievements across migrant generations may explain decreasing gaps between migrant and majority groups; on the other, migrant descendants may face less legal exclusion from entitlement or structural barriers to accessing measures of family policies like the first migrant generation does, as such policies are mainly based on host-country citizenship and/or prior labor force participation. The cross-country comparative article on eligibility for parental leave (Duvander & Koslowski—in this Thematic Series) presents an example of newly arrived migrants being largely disadvantaged in the access to social rights. This finding is remarkable against the backdrop of demographic aging, shrinking working-age populations in Europe, and changing compositions of migrants. In the first decades of large-scale migration to Western Europe following World War II (the so-called “Gastarbeiter” migration), many migrant women may have been “trailing wives” (Cooke, 2008) or migrant men may have maintained multi-local family constellations at both destination and origin (Güveli et al., 2016). In contrast, today’s migration streams consist to greater extents of working women and multigenerational households (Donato et al., 2011)—for instance in the case of humanitarian migration flows, which may have different prerequisites, needs, and

aspirations in regard to work-family reconciliation than migrants in the 1960s did. Taking a broader view, it appears crucial to ensure that first-generation migrants have the opportunity to access parental leave and early childhood education. This is vital for preserving their human capital and preventing any potential negative social implications for their offspring over the long term. Future research should pay attention to family constellations, women's education, and fertility trajectories among migrants (Adserà, 2017) and the interplay of these aspects with their employment trajectories. As first-generation migrants may not be able to rely on family networks for support, disadvantages can cumulate in groups that face multiple dimensions of vulnerability, such as lone mothers (Milewski et al., 2018).

Second, although disadvantages over migrant generations are decreasing, variation across migrants' regions of origin persists. This regional variation often coincides with types of legal status. The articles in this Thematic Series offer examples of a manifesting divide between persons from EU member states and third-country nationals, for instance concerning childcare use in Belgium (Maes et al.—in this Thematic Series) and Italy (Trappolini et al.—in this Thematic Series), as well as (re-)entry into paid labor in Germany (Milewski & Brehm—in this Thematic Series). While migration policies in EU countries *per se* treat migrants from other EU countries differently than third-country nationals, it seems that family policies may further contribute to such a divide. This divide often coincides with perceived cultural differences between European majority populations and new residents, for instance from countries with a Muslim tradition (Foner & Alba, 2008; Koopmans, 2016), which is associated with more patriarchal family systems and gender inequality. Future research should pay attention to the question of the degree to which policies may reinforce cultural diversity, which intersects with social inequalities. Thus, there is a risk that such policies may contribute to increasing the marginalization of certain migrant groups. To counteract such a development, intervention programs could address underprivileged and vulnerable migrant groups and try to increase their participation in, for instance, ECEC (Nieder et al., 2023, for refugees). Theoretical work should also address the role of family policies in shaping variation within populations with migrant background rather than focusing solely on majority populations. While integration theories are often gender-blind, research on family policies and work-family reconciliation—like the gender-revolution framework (Goldscheider et al., 2015), the gender-equity theory (McDonald, 2000), or the Second Demographic Transition Theory (Lesthaeghe, 2010, 2020)—has a blind spot regarding migrant and ethnic minority groups (Milewski & Adserà, 2023).

Third, we have used the term “integration” to indicate that migrants' adaptation is a two-way process that requires structural conditions and efforts on both sides: the migrants and their host society. Previous research demonstrates that the integration of migrants is rather heterogeneous, depending on the country of settlement (Crul et al., 2012) but also, within countries, on the regional context variation (Milewski & Adserà, 2023). In this Thematic Series, the article on childcare use in Belgium demonstrates that various migrant origin groups benefit differently from expansions of childcare. For example, childcare use among families from Maghrebian countries, as compared to other migrant groups, significantly increased only after considerable overall coverage was achieved, and with a time lag. This suggests that marginalization

processes may play a role—especially when public resources are tight and different goals of public childcare need to be addressed. On the one hand, public childcare facilitates mothers' work-family reconciliation patterns; on the other, early childhood education is also necessary for fostering equal opportunities for children from families in which the parents may not work. With respect to societal wellbeing and social cohesion, we believe it is important to reduce shortages in public childcare in general. Future research should dedicate more attention to investigating the mechanisms and interplay between migrants and their context of reception in shaping migrant-native uptake gaps and their implications for both mothers' life course trajectories (see also Milewski & Brehm-in this Thematic Series) and their children's school careers. Furthermore, while the articles in this Thematic Series have not explicitly addressed the diverse legal situations of migrants, future research in the field could examine the degree to which migrants' legal status and different types of residence permits have an impact on parental leave and childcare entitlement, needs, and use. Certain legal situations might imply specific eligibility criteria or targeted policy measures, for instance the growing share of families who have migrated for humanitarian reasons and hence have refugee status in European destination countries, compared to economically-driven migrant families. The specific circumstances and needs of certain legal status groups regarding ECEC and parental leave policies should be studied in future research.

This Thematic Series, *Use and consequences of family policies among migrants and their descendants in Europe*, contributes to research on family policies and migrant integration by calling to our attention significant gaps between ethnic minority groups and majority populations. It also demonstrates great variations within migrant populations. These differences can be seen in eligibility for family policy measures, and consequently in their use and their impacts on further life-course patterns. In a changing Europe in terms of population heterogeneity, with this Thematic Series we wish to contribute to the issue of social rights and equal opportunities among both old and new residents. Ensuring equal social rights and opportunities for all segments of society has become a key concern in regard to social cohesion in a so-called super-diverse Europe.

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