



Ca' Foscari  
University  
of Venice

Master's Degree programme  
in Comparative International Relations

Final Thesis

**Young People of African Descent  
in the EU: Exploring Narratives,  
Socio-Economic Factors and  
Policy Impact to Bridge Realities**

**Supervisor**

Ch. Prof. Sabrina Marchetti

**Graduand**

Faith Yayra Dzanta

Matriculation Number 976091

**Academic Year**

2022 / 2023



## Table of contents

<b>Index .....</b>	<b>ii</b>
<b>List of boxes.....</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>Acknowledgements .....</b>	<b>iv</b>
<b>Abstract .....</b>	<b>vi</b>
<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Chapter 1 – Migration context for young people of African descent .....</b>	<b>7</b>
1.1 Historical background and context overview.....	7
1.2 Definitory background on migration and integration .....	15
1.3 Social context: views on integration and exclusion.....	22
<b>Chapter 2 – Policy frameworks and key actors .....</b>	<b>31</b>
2.1 EU policies on migrants’ integration .....	31
2.2 The governance of migrants’ integration .....	38
2.3 The role of national governments and civil society organizations.....	43
2.4 Development, progress and challenges .....	49
<b>Chapter 3 – Young people of African descent across Europe .....</b>	<b>56</b>
3.1 General overview on the presence of young people of African descent across Europe .....	56
3.2 Education: a first lense on the integration of young people of African descent in Europe.....	59
3.3 Employment: a second lense on the integration of young people of African descent in Europe.....	67
3.4 Onward migration: comparative view on the United Kingdom’s scene .....	76
<b>Conclusions.....</b>	<b>81</b>
<b>Bibliography.....</b>	<b>87</b>

## List of boxes

Box 1.1: Igiaba Scego: an Afro-descendant and her “J’accuse” .....	14
Box 1.2: Bellamy Ogak: creating a space to be seen.....	22
Box 1.3: Anna Osei: preserving roots while breaking societal barriers .....	29
Box 2.3: Afroveronesi: nurturing diversity, fostering unity .....	48
Box 2.4: Abril K. Muvumbi: aiming at development through advocacy .....	54
Box 3.1: <i>Eccellenze Afrodiscendenti</i> and <i>Fratelli e Sorelle</i> : glimpses into success stories .....	58
Box 3.2: Kany Fall: cultivating careers through university guidance coaching .....	67
Box 3.3: Evelyne Afawuaa: an example of female Afro-Italian entrepreneurship .....	71
Box 3.3: In-Formazione: cultural diversity, an asset to professional success .....	75
Box 3.4: Afro-Italian expats: thriving in London .....	78

## Acknowledgements

With a special concern that goes beyond formality, I am grateful to have the opportunity to write these acknowledgments. This aligns with my need and desire to dedicate a few words to the people who have been close to me in my academic journey, especially in the last part which coincided with a particularly challenging period for me. The challenges I encountered last year eventually influenced and, in some ways, undermined my academic performance but it is thanks to each of these individuals which I intend to acknowledge that I can ultimately say I have made it.

I cannot help but start with the motto that motivated me in these last months “Soli Deo Gloria” and by so doing thank God for upholding me beyond what I could have thought was possible.

I then gratefully acknowledge my supervisor Professor Sabrina Marchetti for leading me to a continuous intellectual stimulus starting from when I followed her Migration and Citizenship course all the way to the process of writing this thesis. I appreciate her for being available, understanding, and for showing me great humanity.

Special acknowledgements go to my family. Firstly to my mom, who will perhaps be the one I spend most words for in these acknowledgments because it’s the least I can do. In the two months prior to handing the thesis, she kept me company when I was studying and writing at night. She woke me up the countless times when my body was too tired that I couldn’t hear the alarm (after that of course she’d go back to sleep). My mom showed a care that I guess only a mother can show, through countless gestures that cannot be summed in few words. She encouraged me as only an Iron Lady like her can and she put up with my grumpy attitude when I couldn’t handle fatigue and/or anxiety. I then thank my dad who always told me I needed to go sleep whenever he saw me pulling all-nighters. I always laughingly wondered whether he wasn’t aware that the work was not going to be completed by its own accord. But in reality I appreciated his care which he showed time and time again asking me how things were going during our car rides. Then to Daniel, the twin that my mom decided to give birth to three years before me. I acknowledge him for being a person who truly believes in me, perhaps more than I do. I appreciate him for being the best friend he is to me and also for the chance I have to have him as my Pastor, always providing words of significant impact for every season.

Thanks go to Julie who always cheered me up with her encouragement as well as with calls full of interesting stories that she told me with her unparalleled sassiness.

I then thank the Mansonyms who have been present through thick and thin.

I also thank my KAC family, irreplaceable both as a collective and as individuals.

Thanks to the Aidoos and the Oseis for regularly checking on me and being present in a way that physical distance can't hinder.

I also want to acknowledge the Ruffini Ponchiroli and Associati firm for accompanying me throughout most of my academic journey while I was working there as back office employee. Thanks to their availability I was able to work without having to be worried about not being able to cope with studies.

Thanks to Martina for being a companion since uni days in Padua.

Lastly, as funny as it may be, thanks to Richsamuel for the times where his music peacefully carried me through studies. And thanks to artists I don't personally know like Bridge Music and Limoblaze for keeping me awake during all-night study and writing sessions with their songs blasted at high volume in my headphones.

My heartfelt acknowledgments from a grateful heart.

## Abstract

La presente tesi affronta le esperienze dei giovani afrodiscendenti in Europa, fornendo un contesto storico sulla migrazione nel continente e analizzando come esso sia correlato alla crescente presenza di immigrati di seconda generazione. Questo lavoro illustra le micro-macro dinamiche inerenti alle percezioni identitarie e di appartenenza di questo gruppo per poi delineare il contesto sociale attraverso un'esplorazione degli ambiti dell'istruzione e dell'impiego. Infine, viene considerato l'impatto delle policies europee e il ruolo dei principali attori coinvolti. Tale analisi va di pari passo con la condivisione di diverse interviste e contributi di giovani afrodiscendenti come raccontate ed esposte da loro stessi.

La tesi nasce come risposta ad un quesito che intende esplorare il complesso panorama delle sfide, delle esperienze e delle opportunità che i giovani afrodiscendenti in Europa affrontano. In questa ricerca, emergono appunto domande in merito a cosa si cela dietro alle sfide che questi giovani fronteggiano quotidianamente in termini di integrazione sociale, discriminazione e accesso alle opportunità. Volendo poi comprendere la prospettiva diretta di questi individui, le narrative personali vengono introdotte al fine di cogliere cosa emerge quando si approfondiscono le esperienze di questi giovani nel percorso di costruzione della loro identità culturale, nell'inserimento nel sistema educativo e nel mercato del lavoro. Ciò porta poi a domandarsi quali opportunità siano disponibili per i giovani afrodiscendenti in termini di carriera accademica, crescita professionale e partecipazione attiva nella società. Pertanto, nel cercare di investigare questi aspetti, ci si pone nella posizione di comprendere quali siano i fattori che modellano le esperienze e le prospettive di questi giovani in diversi contesti europei. Fattori che risultano essere spesso soggiacenti e non immediatamente evidenti. Realizzando che le esperienze di questi giovani sono intrecciate a quelle delle generazioni precedenti, in fattispecie dei genitori immigrati di prima generazione, ci si chiede perciò che impatto possa avere tale legame sulla seconda generazione.

Per investigare il tema focale di questa tesi, vengono raccolte analisi qualitative e quantitative di diversi studiosi con l'intento di osservare e analizzare le storie delle seconde generazioni ed aver maggior comprensione delle cause e delle dinamiche che influenzano il loro vissuto. Al contempo, si riconosce l'importanza che hanno i dati numerici nel permettere di cogliere le dimensioni più ampie e l'impatto crescente della

presenza del gruppo studiato. L'analisi quantitativa intende quindi facilitare la disamina della presenza degli immigrati di seconda generazione in settori focali come l'istruzione e l'impiego, nonché di valutare complessivamente le loro prestazioni. Questa dimensione quantitativa consente di identificare le tendenze e i modelli predominanti all'interno di questo gruppo demografico. Simultaneamente, l'analisi qualitativa si basa sulla letteratura secondaria redatta da esperti specializzati negli studi sulla migrazione in Europa. Questa raccolta è volta a fornire non solo una base teorica, ma ad includere anche interviste condotte da esperti in modo da poter contribuire ad una visuale varia degli aspetti inerenti alle esperienze degli immigrati di seconda generazione. Viene apportato un ulteriore arricchimento grazie agli estratti di blog e libri narrativi creati e scritti da giovani afrodiscendenti in Europa, nonché con interviste da loro concesse. In questo approfondimento vi è un intenzionale preponderanza di narrative al femminile per adottare un approccio intersezionale multietnico e di genere. In generale l'accompagnamento di queste storie presentate sotto forma di "boxes" intende fornire un riscontro pratico di quanto viene analizzato in ambito accademico.

Addentrando poi nelle specificità dei tre capitoli in cui è suddivisa la tesi, il primo capitolo discute i concetti fondamentali di migrazione e integrazione. L'analisi terminologica porta a considerare anche i concetti di assimilazione, integrazione, inclusione e coesione sociale. La discussione approfondisce quindi gli approcci contrastanti di assimilazione ed integrazione, sottolineando la natura più multidimensionale di quest'ultima. La tesi evidenzia infatti l'importanza del linguaggio nella formazione delle percezioni sociali, in particolar modo tenendo conto dell'impatto che ha l'espressione "immigrati di seconda generazione". Infatti, viene mossa un'obiezione in merito al termine per via della sua inaccuratezza. Si etichetta un gruppo di individui nati e/o cresciuti in un determinato paese come immigrati di tale paese, semplicemente per via del trascorso migratorio dei genitori.

Proseguendo con il contesto sociale, si esplorano i fattori di integrazione ed esclusione, in particolare nello scenario italiano. L'identità diventa un tema centrale per poter discutere come l'appartenenza, influenzata dalle percezioni di accettazione ed esclusione, giochi un ruolo cruciale nel percorso d'integrazione. Vengono esaminati anche i modelli di assimilazione, nuovamente con un focus sul contesto italiano, evidenziando le complessità affrontate dagli immigrati di seconda generazione nel



conciliare la loro duplice identità etno-nazionale. Ciò porta poi a considerare gli aspetti della discriminazione e del razzismo contro i giovani di origine migratoria. Viene successivamente sottolineato il cambiamento nelle aspettative che hanno gli immigrati di prima generazione rispetto ai loro discendenti, evidenziando che gli ultimi più che i primi si aspettano un trattamento equo nella società in cui sono nati e/o cresciuti.

La discussione si estende alle leggi sulla cittadinanza, in particolare ai principi dello *ius soli* e dello *ius sanguinis*, che influenzano l'accesso alla cittadinanza per gli immigrati di seconda generazione. Anticipando quanto viene approfondito in un capitolo successivo, viene reso noto che la mancanza di accesso alla cittadinanza nel contesto italiano è vista come fonte di discriminazione. Si evidenzia quindi la forte intersezione tra cittadinanza e l'attivismo politico degli immigrati di seconda generazione, i quali attraverso l'attivismo si affermano attivamente nella società in cui si trovano e si oppongono all'etichettatura di immigrati.

Addentrando poi nel secondo capitolo, si parte con l'esplorazione delle politiche dell'Unione Europea sull'integrazione degli immigrati analizzando come vengano sviluppate attraverso un intreccio di quadri legislativi e strumenti di *soft-policy* secondo un modello plasmato dal Trattato di Lisbona. La considerazione delle policies migratorie è motivata dal fatto che il contesto migratorio è attualmente inscindibile dall'analisi del vissuto delle seconde generazioni. Difatti le politiche migratorie finiscono per avere un impatto significativo su questi individui e sulla loro coesione nel contesto sociale. Si rileva dunque che i quadri legislativi, in particolare il Consiglio di Tampere del 1999, e gli strumenti di *soft policy* favoriscono sinergicamente la coesione sociale. Il riconoscimento da parte dell'UE dei paesi d'origine come attori essenziali nell'integrazione segna un punto di rottura rispetto ai modelli tradizionali e vede un allineamento che riflette il cambiamento del panorama demografico nelle città europee.

Passando alle dinamiche di governance, l'intreccio coinvolge i governi nazionali, le organizzazioni della società civile e le direttive sovranazionali. Viene posta enfasi sul Trattato di Lisbona e in particolare sulla collaborazione e sulla governance multilivello che rivela sfide come il gap di implementazione. Questa sezione offre approfondimenti sulla legislazione dell'UE e sull'evoluzione delle strategie d'integrazione.

In fase successiva si osserva come la natura frammentaria delle politiche di integrazione sia influenzata da strutture decentralizzate e dagli approcci nazionali

variabili che portano alla mobilitazione delle organizzazioni della società civile. Un esempio è la Rete G2 in Italia e la campagna “L’Italia sono anch’io”. Queste svolgono un ruolo fondamentale nel plasmare i processi d’integrazione, agendo come intermediari tra gli stati e le comunità degli immigrati di seconda generazione. Si afferma che dal confronto tra organi governativi e organizzazioni della società civile sorgano sfide ed opportunità nella coordinazione delle azioni che permettono di assicurare la distribuzione delle risorse per poter affrontare le diverse esigenze della comunità.

Si valutano perciò lo sviluppo, il progresso e le sfide delle politiche di integrazione degli immigrati. I quadri legislativi, le soft policies, la governance multilivello e il quadro migrazione e sviluppo contribuiscono ad una strategia completa. Le sfide, incluso il gap di implementazione e i cambiamenti demografici urbani, sottolineano la necessità di sforzi continui. Il focus sulle riforme della cittadinanza in Italia fornisce un contesto per comprendere l’impatto delle policies sulla seconda generazione, offrendo una visuale su esperienze diverse e permettendo di rilevare suggerimenti per il miglioramento.

Si giunge poi al terzo capitolo in cui, passando dalle politiche al vissuto, viene offerta una panoramica delle esperienze degli immigrati di seconda generazione. Utilizzando una duplice prospettiva su istruzione ed impiego viene svolto un esame iniziale delle sfide incrociate dai giovani afrodiscendenti. Sottolineando il ruolo cruciale dell’istruzione nel processo di integrazione, si spiegano quali siano le disparità persistenti nei risultati accademici e come tali risultati vengano influenzati da genere e origini etniche. Confrontando prima e seconda generazione si rileva che nonostante vi siano alcuni miglioramenti di rendimento per la seconda generazione, le disuguaglianze persistono, influenzando l’accesso alle opportunità lavorative. L’analisi passa quindi alle dinamiche lavorative, scoprendo disparità nella distribuzione occupazionale e gli ostacoli che impediscono l’accesso a posizioni lavorative più qualificanti. Per comprendere la causa di tali ostacoli si cerca di investigare quali siano le difficoltà incontrate nella ricerca di lavori altamente qualificanti e le conseguenze della sovraqualificazione. Tale fenomeno fa sì che gli immigrati di seconda generazione, pur avendo raggiunto livelli di istruzione avanzati, si trovino ad accettare lavori che danno introiti inferiori rispetto a quanto potrebbero essere effettivamente retribuiti. Ciò è dovuto a fattori quali discriminazione, reti limitate e scarsa conoscenza del mercato del lavoro. Emergono anche variazioni nei livelli di prestazione accademico-lavorativa sulla base dell’origine

etnica, con gruppi specifici che affrontano svantaggi accentuati. Si evidenzia che per gli immigrati di seconda generazione il panorama lavorativo risulta essere di complessa navigazione per via di fattori quali il retroscena sociale, la competenza linguistica, le aspirazioni, la mobilitazione familiare, le esperienze di discriminazione e l'accesso alla cittadinanza.

Spostando l'attenzione sulla *onward migration*, si esamina il fenomeno di migrazione dall'Italia al Regno Unito. Viene illustrato come l'uso della cittadinanza UE per la mobilità intra-UE sia motivato dalle insoddisfazioni di coloro che partono successivamente ad episodi di razzismo sistematico, nonché per via di condizioni socioeconomiche inadeguate. Si attesta poi l'aumento costante del numero di immigrati che lasciano l'Italia dopo aver acquisito la cittadinanza, con una percentuale significativa che emigra in altri paesi europei. Il Regno Unito emerge come destinazione preferita, specialmente per gli italiani provenienti dai paesi del Commonwealth come Nigeria e Ghana. In virtù di ciò motivazioni per la *onward migration* sono ulteriormente esplorate attraverso la lente delle famiglie ghanesi, sottolineando la percezione della superiorità dell'istruzione inglese e il desiderio di prospettive migliori per i loro figli. Esperienze di esclusione nella società italiana, opportunità educative limitate e sfide nel mercato del lavoro contribuiscono all'obbligo per molte famiglie ghanesi di perseguire la *onward migration*.

Considerando invece il panorama delle storie e narrative dei giovani afrodiscendenti, emergono diversi individui menzionati per via del loro impatto significativo. Nel primo capitolo Igiaba Scego, scrittrice afrodiscendente, è resa nota per il suo lavoro di portare consapevolezza in merito alle sfide vissute dagli afroitaliani. Bellamy OgaK è poi riconosciuta per la sua iniziativa di creare visibilità per gli afroitaliani, offrendo una piattaforma in cui condividere esperienze del vissuto attraverso un blog. Vi è successivamente il percorso di Anna Osei, caratterizzato dall'impegno a preservare le radici culturali mentre ci si afferma in ambito-socioeconomico. Nel capitolo due si racconta la realtà dell'associazione Afroveronesi, promotrice di diversità, unità e consapevolezza. Si osservano poi come gli sforzi di *advocacy* di Abril Muvumbi sottolineino il suo impegno per lo sviluppo. Nel terzo capitolo si menzionano la rubrica radiofonica *Eccellenze Afrodiscendenti* di Radio Radicale e la rubrica *Fratelli e Sorelle* di Susanna Twumwah che offrono scorci sui successi degli afroitaliani. Kany Fall viene

poi menzionata per il ruolo svolto nell'indirizzare afroitaliani e non nelle loro carriere, attraverso sessioni di coaching per l'orientamento universitario. Successivamente si fa menzione del percorso imprenditoriale di Evelyne Afawuaa che si distingue mostrando i raggiungimenti di una donna afro-italiana. Si esplorano poi le esperienze degli afroitaliani a Londra con approfondimenti sui vantaggi che ritengono di avere nel Regno Unito. Ciascuna narrazione intende contribuire ad avere una comprensione più ampia delle esperienze afrodiscendenti facendo emergere le sfide, ma esaltando anche i trionfi e la continua ricerca di rappresentazione e riconoscimento. Ogni storia è uno scorcio su una realtà che si incoraggia ad investigare sempre più in ambito accademico.

Questa tesi intende infatti evidenziare la presenza di una lacuna nella ricerca esistente e nel farlo invita a mettere in luce le narrazioni positive e inascoltate degli immigrati di seconda generazione, in particolare dei giovani afrodiscendenti in Europa. Attingendo dalle fonti qualitative e quantitative di diversi studiosi, la tesi esplora le esperienze e le sfide di questo gruppo demografico, riconoscendo le implicazioni delle dinamiche migratorie sul tessuto sociale europeo. La focalizzazione intenzionale sulle storie di successo degli individui presi in considerazione, mira ad affrontare le potenziali lacune degli studi precedenti, volendo incoraggiare ad avere una prospettiva più sfaccettata. Attraverso le narrazioni tratte da blog e libri scritti da giovani afrodiscendenti, la tesi vuole aggiungere una dimensione autentica che mette in rilievo le voci spesso inudite di questo gruppo. Un'analisi dei loro vissuti e delle loro esperienze può diventare parametro utile da far seguire ai nuovi afrodiscendenti, i quali sono sempre più numerosi e pertanto sono sempre più di potenziale influenza per il futuro dell'Europa. L'analisi dei quadri politici e degli attori chiave offre poi spunti significativi sul tema dell'integrazione. In allineamento alle discussioni più ampie su immigrazione e diversità, la tesi intende accennare alla necessità di approcci cooperativi alle sfide condivise nel contesto europeo.

In conclusione, sottolineando l'intersezionalità, il contributo culturale e le sfide in temi di giustizia sociale, questo lavoro presenta la prospettiva delle esperienze degli immigrati di seconda generazione mirando ad essere un invito a riconoscere la necessità di più contributi positivi all'attuale corpus di conoscenze sui giovani afrodiscendenti in Europa.

## Introduction

In her *Contesting Race and Citizenship*, Sociology Professor Camilla Hawthorne (2022) shares an interesting excerpt while discussing the visibility and representation of Black Italian stories and the broader narrative of young people of African descent born in European countries. She mentions an episode where renowned Nigerian author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie expresses the invisibility of these stories and the need to hear them, emphasizing the challenges faced by people of African descent in Italy. In response, Italian-Somali writer Igiaba Scego asserts that the story of Afro-Italians is not silent, highlighting a history of literature and struggles against racism and exploitation. The passage concludes with the author's hope that the stories and analysis shared in her book will contribute to the narrative of Black Italy and the ongoing fight for racial justice in Italy, Black Europe, and the Black Mediterranean.

As an Afro-Italian, untouched by belonging crisis and seemingly unharmed by instances of discrimination, possibly overlooked due to normalization and internalization, I harbored a curiosity somewhat related to the argument presented in the passage which has been referenced. This curiosity was rooted in a desire to discover more about the narratives of young people of African descent from their perspective and particularly to learn about their positive success stories. Assessing the prevalence of such stories within my environment, where I have seen individuals overcome obstacles and succeeding, it suggested there could be a transformative narrative for second-generation immigrants in Italy and Europe. This interest was a prompt to delve into research and set the foundation for this work. The initial intent was to steer away from accentuating the narrative of racism, being aware of how it has been frequently addressed by Afro-Italians across diverse fields, and instead explore the experiences of individuals who strive to change the narrative through their actions, disregarding and overcoming potential obstacles brought by racism. However, as the research progressed, the realization dawned that carving space for success stories required the examination of the background context. This context, knitted with discussions on the challenges faced by second-generation immigrants, actually unraveled narratives of discrimination impacting identity, belonging, and

exclusion. It became evident that addressing the broader context, including matters of discrimination, was essential to provide a global perspective.

From this understanding stems the objective of this thesis to unravel the significance of bringing forth positive yet often unheard stories of second-generation immigrants, with a particular focus on the European context. The intention is to shed light on narratives that have remained in the shadow while simultaneously acknowledging the larger frame in which these experiences unfold. Indeed, it is understood that presenting a one-sided narrative is counterproductive, so for an unbiased view which can aid understanding both sides of the experience need to be explored. Overall, the primary aim of this study is to emphasize on the need for the academic field to delve deeper into researching about the dynamics revolving around the experiences of second-generation immigrants while offering reasons as to why such research is deemed as necessary. In the pursuit of this objective, the analysis delves into multifaceted issues encompassing socio-cultural and governance dynamics. The research takes a closer look at the stories of second-generation immigrants by sharing interviews conducted with some fairly renowned Afro-Italians. The voices of these Afrodescendants are brought to the limelight also by sharing extracts from blogs and books written by them. In this work, the collection of these stories is shared with the use of boxes that accompany the various subchapters as to further enhance the diverse topics that are treated while providing a match with reality. Considering the width of the happenings of the studied group, the boxes cover a spectrum of themes tackling the preservation of cultural roots amidst socio-economic advancement, the entrepreneurial journeys of Afro-Italian women, the impact of media representation through platforms like blogs and radio shows, and the role of advocacy and community initiatives in fostering diversity and awareness. As the title of this thesis puts it, the narratives that are shared allow to bridge the realities of young people of African descent in Europe. Considering the limited scope of this thesis, the selection of the stories is made by following a criterion that zooms on Afro-Italian women. The focus on Afro-Italians is a choice driven by the wish to enhance their representation, promoting their cultural contributions, and addressing their challenges for social justice. The intentional dominance of women's narratives in this context promotes an intersectional approach that knits gender and multiethnicity. Furthermore, this work wishes to gain strength by emphasizing the interconnected nature of migration dynamics, particularly within the

European context, and recognizing the influence of global events on the experiences of second-generation immigrants. By acknowledging the implications of migration, historical legacies, and intersectional experiences within the European landscape, the research subtly encourages a perspective to a global understanding on the happenings of a growing and thus potentially impactful demographic. This approach, on a broader view, aligns with the wider discourse on fostering cooperation to address shared challenges in the European context. By so doing, an iota is added to the ongoing dialogue on immigration and diversity.

This work draws from qualitative and quantitative material from scholars in the migratory field who also focus on second generations. The review of the results of findings from diverse scholars who use different methods is motivated by the need of drawing from observations and textual analysis to understand the causes and mechanisms revolving around second-generation immigrants, while also recognizing the importance of numerical data to grasp the broader dimensions and growing impact of this demographic. Quantitative sources such as ISTAT and EUROSTAT are of fundamental use to examining the presence of second-generation immigrants in key domains like education, employment, and their overall performance in these arenas. The quantitative dimension allows the identification of predominant trends and patterns within the studied group. Simultaneously the qualitative sources, which are the most widely used, are secondary literature authored by scholars who specialize in migration studies across Europe. This literature provides a theoretical foundation that goes alongside interviews conducted by these same academics. This combination enables the understanding of the manifold aspects inherent to the experiences of second-generation immigrants. As previously mentioned, this is complemented by interviews sourced from blogs authored by young people of African descent in Europe and narrative books written by individuals from the same demographic.

Considering structure, this work is divided into three chapters. In the first one, the experiences of young people of African descent in Europe are contextualized. This involves providing a historical background on migration, emphasizing its relation to the growing presence of second-generation immigrants. The chapter aims to establish a background understanding of migration and integration concepts, particularly as they relate to children born to immigrant parents. It further delves into the social context,

observing the micro-macro dynamics and the impact of labels on identity and societal perceptions. The focus on the Italian scenario is intended to shed light on the complexities of identity and the interplay of integration and exclusion for second-generation immigrants. Chapter 2 observes the landscape of policy frameworks and key actors influencing the experiences of the second generation. The exploration begins within the broader European Union context and subsequently moves on to Italy. The chapter unfolds by analyzing EU policies on migrants' integration, inspecting the legislative framework defined by the Treaty of Lisbon and the multifaceted nature of the policies at hand. The analysis extends to the governance of migrants' integration, exploring mechanisms at the EU level. Moving closer to the national level, it delves into the role of national governments and civil society organizations, examining collaborative efforts and challenges in shaping integration policies. The exploration concludes by unraveling the development, progress, and challenges encountered in the ongoing journey toward creating environments that foster the belonging of the second generation, highlighting the dynamic nature of the policy landscape and the crucial role played by various involved actors. Chapter 3 is set to provide an overview of the experiences of young people of African descent across Europe by emphasizing the importance of understanding their lived experiences within broader societal contexts, thereby advancing beyond the observation of policies. The chapter contemplates the presence of second-generation immigrants at large in Europe. It explores key themes related to social integration and analyzes the interplay between education and employment. Subchapters focus on education as a foundational lens, examining childhood education, family influence, and aspirations, with a zoom into the Italian context. The second lens explores employment, addressing disparities in occupational distribution and challenges arising from gender, generation, and ethnic backgrounds. In conclusion the chapter also examines onward migration, particularly from Italy to the United Kingdom, revealing challenges leading to migration decisions.

Anticipating a literature review, existing literature on the experiences of second-generation immigrants considers diverse frames. First of all, scholars provide and investigate theories concerning the topics of assimilation and integration. A particularly relevant one is the “segmented assimilation theory” developed by sociologists Alejandro Portes, Rubén G. Rumbaut, and Min Zhou in the late 1990s as an alternative to more



traditional theories that tended to oversimplify the immigrant experience. Proposed to tackle the experiences of different immigrant groups in the United States, Bjørn Thomassen (2010) draws from it to mention varied assimilation processes and how they can be transferrable when dealing with second-generation immigrants in Europe. In relation to the notion of assimilation, the topic of identity is explored and theorized with concepts like “identity hybridization” and “suspended identities”, which Jacqueline Andall (2002) considers in order to mention the context-dependent nature of identities among second-generation immigrants, challenging traditional notions of fixed identities. Multiple dimensions like ethnicity, family roles, and occupation gain meaning in specific social contexts, emphasizing the complexity of identity and its connection to integration challenges. As integration challenges emerge, matters on citizenship are introduced by scholars like Camilla Hawthorne (2022) to discuss discrimination in accessing legal rights due to lack of entitlement to citizenship rights in the case of Italy, which gives room to analyze policy implications. Granted citizenship then paves the way to turn the focus on onward migration. This is a phenomenon that is investigated by academics such as Francesco Della Puppa (2021) and Francesco Goglia (2023). In their research, premising that EU citizenship offers the opportunity to migrate within the EU and move to another EU member state, they investigate the causes that lead to this occurrence. They further address this topic by considering the Italian context with relation to the United Kingdom, choicest destination for relocation for several Third-Country Nationals. Moving on to deal with the presence and performance of second-generation immigrants, Alessandra Minello and Nicola Barban (2012) make known the educational expectations of children of immigrants in Italy. Laura Zanfrini (2018) also gives her significant share in studying the transition that children of immigrants have from school to work and their employment status considering the risk of overqualification. She also notes the causes that prevent the emerging of success stories of second-generation immigrants in general discourses, a topic that is also tackled by Jens Schneider (2022) who researches the pathways of success stories and promotes their dissemination. Despite the breadth of existing literature on second-generation immigrants it is important to highlight that the scholarly exploration of this demographic is relatively recent, encompassing a span of less than 30 years. Therefore, with this work there is a reassertion of the need for ongoing research and further investigation in this field.

This thesis wishes to give a share to the existing research by spotlighting positive and often unheard narratives of second-generation immigrants, specifically young individuals of African descent in Europe. Drawing from qualitative and quantitative sources of several scholars, it is possible to explore the experiences and challenges of this demographic, acknowledging the wider implications of migration dynamics. These sources go side by side with the stories shared in the boxes that deal with diverse themes as the diverse sections of the thesis, intending to add an authentic dimension which can potentially be missing in purely academic examinations. Indeed, by merging these narratives to the research carried out on these topics the intention is to adopt an approach that encourages a further consideration of the experiences of second-generation immigrants in the academic field. The intentional focus on success stories addresses potential biases in previous studies, subtly contributing to a more balanced perspective. The inclusion of the analysis of policy frameworks and key actors also advances practical insights into integration which aligns with broader discussions on immigration and diversity. By so doing the research hints at the necessity of cooperative approaches to shared challenges in the European context. Emphasizing intersectionality, cultural contributions, and social justice challenges, this work brings forth the perspective of second-generation immigrants' experiences. In sum, the thesis aims to be a positive nuanced addition to the existing body of knowledge on young people of African descent in Europe.

# **Chapter 1: Migration context for young people of African descent**

## **1.1. Historical background and context overview**

In a Europe that is constantly changing, examining the experiences of youth in this dynamic landscape is not only a reflection of the present but also a compelling view into the future. Considering the plethora of different cultures converging as a result of migration to Europe, a focus on the children of immigrants can provide a perspective on the realities of a demographic that currently faces challenges on matters of identity and belonging in the land they were born or raised in. The interest in observing these experiences is propelled by the recognition that the increasing numbers within this group position them to eventually exert influence on the European community over time, potentially playing a role in shaping the future European identity. In line with the intention of presenting the underrepresented and understudied stories of a demographic whose narrative is deemed worth paying attention to, this chapter aims to provide an overview to contextualize migration issues in relation with children of immigrants and specifically young people of African descent.

Professor Antonsich (2022) places particular relevance on matters concerning second-generation immigrants. He argues that children of migrants hold significant importance in the European context. Born or raised in a nation different from that of their migrant parents and characterized as minorities due to their ethnic heritage, they embody the diversity of their parents while being socialized into the nation since birth or early age, which makes them similar to their native peers. This focus on children of immigrants gives room to a deeper examination of the dynamics and tensions linked to nation and migration-related diversity. With this objective, extensive surveys have been conducted to evaluate the level of similarity between the population labeled as “second-generation immigrants” and their European-by-origin peers. There are several factors that are taken into account such as academic attainment, language proficiency, occupational status, and

political attitudes which, as crucial as they are, are going to be investigated. These are parameters employed to assess the upward or downward trajectories of second-generation immigrants in the context of “segmented assimilation” (Portes et al. as cited in Thomassen, 2010) which will be expanded in a later section. Such methods tell of the effort put in to become integral members of the societies in which they were either born or grew up. Antonsich (2022) further asserts that in the process of researching more about matters of assimilation the use of quantitative or qualitative study approaches tend to maintain the notion of nations as fixed and stable socio-spatial constructs, where individuals are either assimilated or excluded. Indeed, the first approach is set to understand views on assimilation or integration, thus implying there is a difference that needs to be smoothed, whereas the second approach emphasizes more the nature of the nation and gives less attention to spaces and forms of national inclusivity. He therefore calls to deviate from conventional viewpoints to understand how the symbolic boundaries of the nation are redefined by children of immigrants. This perspective aligns with the direction of this work to amplify the voices of children of immigrants and explore how these individuals, by asserting their national belonging, intend to redefine the society in which they belong.

To aid the understanding of the context within which second-generation immigrants navigate and share their perspectives, embarking on a brief historical overview will provide a temporal framing that will set the stage to understand current circumstances. Starting in the early 1950s, European countries experienced a distinct migration wave, contrasting with the immediate post-war period. This wave was characterized by movements from Southern Europe, non-European Mediterranean countries, and former colonies toward Western and Northern Europe. In particular, the movement from Southern Europe was spurred by a combination of factors, including the economic expansion in Western and Northern European countries, post-war reconstruction, and labor shortages. The economic disparities between Southern and Northern Europe during the 1950s and 1960s created a magnet effect, drawing people from Southern Europe toward regions experiencing robust economic growth. Furthermore, the decolonization of former colonial powers played a role in shaping migration patterns. Former colonial powers, such as the United Kingdom, France, Netherlands, Belgium, and Portugal, lost their colonies in the post-war period and the

independence of nations like India, Ghana, and Algeria marked significant milestones in this process. This led population movements from former colonies to the respective mother countries as granting of rights to citizens of former colonies was facilitated. Moreover, the economic expansion in Western and Northern Europe, coupled with the need for low-skilled labor in various industries, led to the active recruitment of workers from Southern peripheries, the Mediterranean countries, and even Turkey. Bilateral agreements regulated the recruitment of migrant unskilled workforce during this period. It should be noted that these migration movements were initially considered temporary, with the expectation that migrants would return to their home countries after the economic boom subsided. However, migration did not cease, and between 1973 and 1985, movements were predominantly characterized by family reunification (Dustmann and Frattini, 2011b).

This brief European historical overview helps understand that the current composition of immigrant populations in European countries is shaped by different levels of immigration from various origin countries. These differences, attributed both to the different intensities in migration flows as well as different historical timelines, reflect in terms of origin, ethnicity, and education among the immigrant communities. Indeed, some European countries were already home to considerable immigrant populations as early as the 1960s. In contrast, other countries experienced significant immigration only from the 1980s or later, and this is the case of Italy for example. Italy has undergone substantial demographic shifts since the 1980s, witnessing a remarkable rise in international migration. On January 1, 1999, foreign nationals accounted for 2.2% of the population, totaling 1.3 million. Over the following two decades, this figure rose to 5.2 million, constituting 8.7% of the total population. The growth during the period between 2003 and 2010 was particularly noteworthy, with an average annual increase of 12.7% (Antonsich, 2022). This tells Italy's encounter with immigration has been significantly concentrated in the new millennium and now has an immigrant population above the EU average. Furthermore, a consequence of this migration wave is the emergence of a notable population of second-generation immigrants. In 2008 they surpassed 500,000. In 2018 they reached 1.3 million, comprising 2.2% of the total population and 13% of the under-age population, with a substantial majority (75%) born in Italy. In 2020 those aged between 0 and 35 years were about 3 million. In line with the approach attributed by

Antonsich to scholars, researchers have initiated surveys, such as ITAGEN2, to assess integration and acculturation levels (Thomassen, 2010; Antonsich, 2022; Riniolo, 2019).

The significantly increasing numbers, which denote a growing population of children of immigrants in Italy as in Europe, encourage a reconsideration of existing frameworks which Veronica Riniolo (2019) and Claudia Milan (2022) do take into account when mentioning that the active role played by children of immigrants in reshaping the nation through their claims of national belonging remains largely unexplored yet should not be overlooked. Second generations are gaining visibility in different spheres of culture and influence as the various stories shared in the boxes will reflect. However, these advancements occur amid challenges, set against a backdrop of prejudiced rhetoric, particularly fueled by the discourse on the refugee crisis relating to the astounding influx of refugees and asylum seekers. Riniolo and Milan highlight that this narrative not only portrays immigrants as perceived threats culturally, socially, and economically but also groups together various categories like long-term immigrants and refugees in a scaffold of exclusion. The fact that second-generation immigrants are defined as such reveals how they are also included in the discourse on immigrants even though they do not identify themselves in it. These individuals harbor a sense of belonging to the country they have been born and raised in. However, despite their country's investment in their education and upbringing, there is a striking paradox as they strive for full recognition as integral members of the society. This contention lived by second-generation immigrants is voiced out by authors such as Igiaba Scego, whose quest to make Afro-descendants' experiences more acknowledged is viewed in Box 1.1.

The contradiction between the coexistence of belonging and exclusion leads to consider the aspect of social cohesion, intended as the bond that unifies a community. Such bond is susceptible to disruption by reason of wealth inequality, poverty, and intercommunal tensions and is therefore particularly linked to the discourse on migration. As a matter of fact, the ongoing debate surrounding the impact of migration on social cohesion is still an unfamiliar territory for which research is yet to provide a conclusion. On this note, Dr. Céline Bauloz (2019) mentions that there are studies that highlight potential negative consequences of diversity in specific nations as well as research specifically from Europe that suggests that factors such as income inequality and deprivation exercise more substantial influence on social cohesion than diversity itself.

In this intricate scenario, the quest for social cohesion extends beyond harmonious coexistence. There is in fact the demand for inclusive participation of all segments of the population, immigrants included, children of immigrants included. Such participation is to encompass diverse social bonds through education, health, employment, housing, and civic and political engagement.

The emphasis placed on understanding the perspectives of children of immigrants and the social environments that mold their experiences aligns with the primary aim of this work. Beyond amplifying their experiences, the objective is to provide a platform for their positive narratives. This viewpoint is further endorsed by Professor Jens Schneider and his colleagues (2022). Indeed, over the past few decades, studies on the descendants of immigrants have instead predominantly addressed the hurdles associated with assimilating children originating from disadvantaged backgrounds. As already mentioned, the notion of assimilating individuals in the country they were raised in poses some questions which will be further analyzed. Individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds are those whose parents have limited formal education and are non-native speakers of the national language, navigating educational systems that are not properly prepared to cater to their distinctive needs. Beyond concerns of academic underperformance and dropout rates, extensive investigations have explored various challenges inherent to marginalized populations. These challenges include issues such as unemployment, discrimination, criminality, residential segregation in urban areas, and potential radicalization among children of immigrants. The focus on integration challenges may have extended a predominant concentration on migration-related issues. However, such emphasis is justified, considering that a significant majority of children of immigrants in European societies continue to encounter disadvantages. Unlike their European-by-origin counterparts, the second generation continually faces less favorable socio-economic position, and the prevailing narrative highlights the challenges these individuals encounter to advance in social mobility.

Recognizing the prevailing negative narrative surrounding second-generation immigrants, it is reasonable to delve deeper into the broader narrative landscape by questioning whether the existing discourse captures the entirety of the immigrant experience and if it falls short, there is a need to clarify the underlying reasons for this gap in understanding. The countercurrent voices of scholars such as Bjørn Thomassen

(2010) advocate for a paradigm shift. He emphasizes the importance of transitioning from a focus on “problem stories” to incorporating “success stories”. This perspective underlines the existence of a positive dimension within the narrative on second-generation immigrants that often remains overshadowed. Thomassen asserts that the inclination toward problem-centric narratives is fueled by journalistic considerations, where such stories tend to attract more attention. Moreover, due to funding dynamics, academics are also drawn to investigating pressing issues. Authorities, including city councils, states, and the EU, typically fund projects that identify and address social problems, thereby influencing the academic focus on issues. Lastly, the growing attention to immigration in politics, especially from parties with anti-immigration agendas, impacts second-generation immigrants.

In light of this, Thomassen (2010) and Schneider (2022), among others, affirm that it becomes imperative to address challenges but also to present the other side of the coin and showcase success stories, just as this work intends to display with a nominal input. It is affirmed indeed that these stories are actually instrumental in ensuring that public discourse does not fossilize on the negative narrative which then would negatively affect the social cohesion of diverse demographic groups, and in this context of second-generation immigrants. This understanding falls in alignment with Thomassen’s following quote which makes mention of the Italian context.

The necessity of hearing the ‘good stories’ is not only an ethical command: if we are to understand the mechanisms of integration, the point is evidently analytical. If the larger public never hears about the nonproblematic and positive life stories of immigrants, the negative view will only solidify. We somehow need to make that ‘normality’ visible: that people come to Italy to work and live a perfectly normal life, and have children who are silently becoming part of our society (Thomassen, 2010).

Keeping this in view, it should be pointed out that ensuring a fair and unbiased representation is not only essential for a global and accurate understanding of the situation but also to prevent the solidification of negative perspectives by the broader public. It is also needed to explore how unique career paths of second-generation immigrants evolved against challenging circumstances, particularly within educational and labor systems that conventionally perpetuate social hierarchies. To serve this purpose it is possible to illustrate the motives for which immigrants migrate and how they lead ordinary lives



where their children are seamlessly integrated into society. Moreso, as Thomassen (2010) and Schneider (2022) affirm, exhibiting the way in which second-generation immigrants have achieved upward mobility and currently hold prominent professional positions is useful to defy traditional patterns of social reproduction. They further emphasize that realizing the distinctiveness of success stories, it is also interesting to understand critical decision points in career trajectories by exploring choices related to studies, vocations, job applications, and entry into specific professional domains, alongside the significant influence of institutional mechanisms. The study can then extend to how these individuals navigate structural conditions and institutional challenges in professional fields, particularly in contexts unprepared for people like them. Indeed, the convergence of low expectations, discriminatory attitudes, and structural barriers can compel young individuals of immigrant origin to forge alternative routes toward their goals. Consequently, studying the non-linear trajectories characterizing social ascent calls for the development of innovative solutions that actively create space for the emergence of individuals whose narratives can become additional positive ones within the realm of upward mobility.

In this initial section, emphasis was placed on the significance of exploring the experiences of second-generation immigrants, considering their growing presence which is bound to have impact on the future of Europe. As the geographical focus is centered on Europe, precisely, and with a closer look at Italy, an historical timeline depicting the surge in migration flows throughout the past century was presented to contextualize the presence of second-generation immigrants. Scholarly perspectives were then incorporated to understand the importance of bringing to light the positive, yet quite unknown stories of second-generation immigrants. Given these considerations, this study reaffirms its commitment to give its share in contributing to spotlight unheard narratives while simultaneously acknowledging the broader context. The objective is not to present a one-sided narrative but to offer an as much as possible unbiased view, recognizing that comprehending one facet requires understanding the other. Therefore, as the analysis explores multifaceted issues encompassing identity belonging and experiences of exclusion, education and employment, policy impact and political involvement, it will concurrently unveil firsthand stories of second-generation immigrants, with a specific focus on young people of African descent. This approach aims to offer a different

perspective on their world, encompassing challenges, complexities, and notably, positive aspects.

**Box 1.1: Igiaba Scego: an Afro-descendant and her “J’accuse”**

Born in Rome in 1974 to Somali parents, Igiaba Scego is a writer, journalist, and researcher. Noteworthy for her dedication to amplifying the narratives of young people of African descent in Italy, she actively addresses the struggles against racism and exploitation faced by Afro-Italians. Her commitment to this cause is evident in her response to Nigerian author Chimamanda Ngozie Adichie’s assertion that the stories of Afro-Italians are not silent (Hawthorne, 2022).

Scego’s passion for ensuring that Afro-descendant literature takes center stage is evident in her “J’accuse” directed towards Italy, as expressed in the introduction of her book *Future. Il domani narrato dalle voci di oggi* (2019). In this literary work, which can be translated in English as “Future. Tomorrow narrated through today’s voices”, she aims to draw Italy’s attention to the reality of an “Italianness” (Andall, 2002) that is often overlooked. The book serves as a collection of 11 contributions from Afro-Italian women writers, covering autobiographical reflections, quasi-political manifestos, and narratives. Themes explored include the weight of blackness, identity crisis, challenges faced by Afro-Italian women, and the quest for rootedness in a country that does not fully recognize new Italians.

Despite the sharing of adversities and negative experiences, Scego closes her introduction revealing that her intention is to present these struggles with a hopeful outlook for a future where Afro-Italians are embraced in the country they hold dear.

*Sources: (Hawthorne, 2022. “Contesting Race and Citizenship: Youth Politics in the Black Mediterranean”); (Scego, 2019. “Future: Il domani narrato dalle voci di oggi”).*

## 1.2 Definitory background on migration and integration

Embarking on the exploration of the realities faced by young people of African descent, it is crucial to establish a foundational understanding of the concepts of migration and integration of which the surface has just been touched. This subchapter serves to provide a background on the definitions in this field, placing particular emphasis on terminology that links the idea of migration with the experiences of children born to immigrant parents. By defining these terms, it will be possible to further examine the group which is the focus of this work.

First and foremost, it should be noted that the notion of “migrant” can hold several interpretations that arise based on the policy and analytical context. On this note, in the article *Migration, inclusion and social cohesion: challenges, recent developments and opportunities* Dr. Céline Bauloz and colleagues (2019) mention that according to the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) a migrant is any person who changes their country of usual residence. Such definition proves to be useful when considering statistical analysis, nonetheless the authors of the article realize that when migration is related to inclusion, the concept of migrant becomes broader and includes descendants of migrants born in the host country. From here stems the term “second-generation (im)migrant” which detects that children of immigrants can be perceived as immigrants themselves from the society they are born and raised in, and this can have effect on matters of identity. Discussions on the use of this term will be further expounded in this subchapter and issues related with self-identification will be considered later on.

As the aspect of inclusion has been introduced, it is useful to have a clearer view on it, adding the needed nuances to the concepts of assimilation and integration. In the currently considered article (Castles et al. in Bauloz et al., 2019) it is stated that inclusion refers to the process through which immigrants or refugees integrate into specific sectors of society, such as education, the labor market, the welfare system, political representation, and more. The focus lies on deliberate and active mechanisms, including policies implemented by public agencies or employers, as well as the initiatives undertaken by immigrants themselves. Inclusion stands in contrast to exclusion and social exclusion, embodying the active involvement and integration of individuals from diverse

backgrounds into various facets of societal life. The contrasting concept on exclusion entails the deprivation of access to specific rights, resources, or entitlements typically associated with being a member of a particular society. Immigrants may find inclusion in certain aspects of society, such as the labor market, while simultaneously facing exclusion from others, such as political participation. As highlighted by the definitions, inclusion and exclusion can directly affect the social cohesion of immigrants, a cohesion that is understood as harmonious coexistence. Social cohesion denotes a societal or community structure characterized by a shared vision and a sense of belonging for all communities involved. In a socially cohesive environment, diversity in people's backgrounds and circumstances is not only recognized but also positively valued. This involves providing similar life opportunities for individuals from various backgrounds and fostering strong, positive relationships between people of different backgrounds within workplaces, schools, and neighborhoods (IOM as cited in Bauloz et al., 2019).

Inasmuch as diversity may have a positive connotation, it should be observed that certain environments favor instead the minimization or elimination of it, calling for immigrants to fully merge into the customs of the host country they are in. This leads to the assimilation-integration dichotomy which defines the manner through which immigrants get accustomed to the country they are in and how their descendants are included in society. As will be further observed, assimilation tends to prioritize uniformity and homogeneity within the society whereas integration is more likely to aim for a harmonious coexistence of different cultural backgrounds within the host country. In considering the definitions of the terms "assimilation" and "integration" this section restates the definitions from the International Organization for Migration's (IOM) glossary as cited in Bauloz's article (2019).

Starting with assimilation, diversity is viewed as a potential threat to social cohesion in this frame. Thus, assimilation advocates for immigrants to undergo a significant level of adaptation while expecting minimal adaptation from the host country. This implies a unidirectional approach which calls for immigrants to fully adopt the national identity and values of the receiving society, often at the expense of their original cultural identities. Assimilation can be therefore defined as a one-directional policy approach to integration whereby ethnic or social groups, often minorities, adopt the cultural practices of another group, usually the majority ethnic or social group. This

process involves the absorption of language, traditions, values, norms, and behavior, ultimately resulting in the assimilating party becoming less socially distinguishable from other members of the receiving society (IOM as cited in Bauloz et al., 2019). Integration, on the other hand, is described as a reciprocal and two-way process involving mutual adaptation between immigrants and the societies they reside in. This process incorporates immigrants into various aspects of the receiving community, including social, economic, cultural, and political dimensions. It goes beyond a linear path, emphasizing joint responsibilities for both immigrants and host communities (IOM as cited in Bauloz et al., 2019).

Integration encompasses related concepts such as social inclusion and social cohesion, highlighting its multidimensional nature. This involves reciprocal cultural adaptation between the host population and groups of immigrants and their descendants. This adaptation manifests at the individual level through affective, behavioral, and cultural changes resulting from interactions between these groups. Researchers often distinguish between structural and socio-cultural integration. Structural integration pertains to educational and labor market positions, while socio-cultural integration involves intangible aspects such as language proficiency, feelings of belonging, and informal interactions with the majority population. Further dimensions of integration include institutional integration focusing on migrant involvement in major sectors and institutions like the workforce, healthcare system, and education. Cultural integration addresses shifts in immigrants' cultural orientation and identification after arriving in the host country. In the culture frame the contrasting concepts of ethnocentrism and cultural relativism are often considered. Ethnocentrism involves taking only one culture and social context as the reference point, whereas cultural relativism considers both the cultures and social contexts of origin and arrival (Capesciotti and Sansonetti, 2021; Vlasta et al., 2019).

Having understood the differences between the notions of assimilation and integration, it is useful to observe the preferences in use based on the spatial context of interest. In *The Socioeconomic Position of Women of African, Middle Eastern, Latin American and Asian Descent Living in the European Union*, a study authored by Marta Capesciotti and Silva Sansonetti (2021), it is stated that according to the European custom assimilation is typically perceived negatively, representing a process where individuals neglect their original culture and knowledge in favor of adopting to that of the host

country. On the other hand, integration carries more positive connotations, seen as a constructive adaptation to the host society. Integration progresses as newcomers develop their ability to draw from the host culture's knowledge while also contributing their own knowledge to the society. However, it should be noted that integration is influenced by the specific characteristics of the host country, so factors such as the level of discrimination can either hinder or foster differences in the integration process. On this note, in the US context, scholars prefer using the term assimilation as they consider it as devoid of race-related references that integration carries within the specific societal context of the US. Considering the focus of this study, the term integration is preferred.

As alluded to previously, while integration is typically associated with newcomers, in public and political discourse, the responsibility to integrate is often extended to second-generation immigrants, who were born in the host country. The fact that second-generation immigrants are viewed as a group that needs to integrate, suggests that these individuals are not fully envisioned as part of the society and are therefore meant to take steps towards that direction. This assumption gives room to some question marks which require to deal widely with the implication of the very term "second-generation immigrants" and to bring to the forefront the significance of definitions. Indeed, as Laura Zanfrini underscores, definitions not only serve as analytical tools for studying processes but also play a central role in comprehending these processes as discussing the meaning of various objects of study must be an object of study itself (Zanfrini as cited in Riniolo, 2019). Upon this statement it is possible to infer that through the analysis of the language employed and its implications the societal perceptions that drive the expectation for second-generation immigrants to integrate can be unraveled. Considering this, in this thesis, "integration" is not about insisting that second-generation immigrants blend into the society of their birth or upbringing. Rather, it is used to conceptualize their distinct journey of societal belonging. The very act of studying these definitions becomes a key aspect of understanding the dynamics of inclusion in society and the role that language plays in shaping perceptions of belonging. So, the term "second-generation immigrants" is adopted to describe the descendants of immigrants who are typically born and acculturated in the country where their parents have settled.

Capesciotti and Sansonetti (2021) point out that the concept of "second-generation immigrants" was introduced in migration studies to categorize the offspring of parents

who migrated to a new country, where their children were subsequently born and/or raised. However, this could be considered as a more rigid interpretation which confines the definition to individuals born in the country of immigration. In contrast, a broader definition of second generations can encompass those who migrated with their parents to the country of residence at a very young age. The adoption of this wider definition acknowledges crucial factors that shape the integration process for this subgroup. For instance, very young children within this category may have limited recollection of their pre-migration experiences. Moreover, their educational journey may have mostly taken place in the country of immigration of their parents, where they acquired language skills and social norms, seamlessly integrating into their new societal environment.

Digging deeper into the definition of second-generation immigrants, Jacqueline Andall (2022) navigates through the studies carried out by various scholars observing the way in which the interpretations of this term vary based on birthplace, age of arrival, and parental origin. Even within the European context, definitions of second generations lead to a divide between scholars who extend the term to children regardless of their birthplace and those who include children who arrived in a European country before the age of 15. Indicating the age frame is relevant since from a methodological standpoint, combining both native-born and 15-year-old foreign-born individuals in the same survey poses challenges. This diverse grouping has the potential to significantly impact research inquiries into identity, social integration, and identification with the home culture. It emerges that academic studies lack a consensus, and this poses challenges when it comes to determining whom to include within the second-generation category. In light of these complexities, sociologist Rubén Rumbaut's classification provides a valuable contribution. He advocates for a more precise differentiation within the second generation, introducing terms such as 1.25, 1.5, and 1.75 generation. This classification refers to foreign-born children arriving after the age of 12, between 6 and 12, and before 6 (Rumbaut as cited in Andall, 2002).

Beyond classification challenges, the definition is questioned by some scholars both for the use of the terms "generation" and "migrant". Thomassen (2010) explains that inasmuch as the concept of the second generation is instrumental in highlighting that this subgroup may possess distinct characteristics and needs compared to the first generation of immigrants, it also reveals that this term applied to immigrants does not align with the

traditional understanding of generations in an empirical sense. Indeed, there is not an actually defined time span and the term encompasses individuals born to immigrant parents across diverse years who may have faced different experiences based on the temporal context and location in which they grew up. It is concluded that the only certainty is that they are second generations compared to their parents. Moving onto the use of the term “migrant”. It is evident that there arises an issue when this term is also used in reference to individuals who have never migrated, thus people who are not immigrants are labelled as such.

The concept of labels leads to understand that the term “second-generation immigrants” does not originate from an act of self-definition. Instead, it originates and is used by academics, journalists, policymakers, and statisticians who rightly use analytical terms to organize data and delineate areas of discourse. Nonetheless it also shows that host countries are focused on categorizing and enumerating immigrants and their descendants (Thomassen, 2010). It is true however that some individuals may eventually adopt this label as a means of self-identification. Notably, the notion of “second generation immigrants” or “2G immigrants” is spreading among organizations and networks within countries like Italy. When focusing on the Italian landscape, outside the academic world there are other alternatives which are employed. Riniolo (2019) and Milan (2022) list “new generations”, “new Italians”, “bridge-generation”, “immigrant minors”, and “young people with a migratory background” among others. Recent alternatives are “Italians of foreign origin” or “Afro-Italian” and “Italians of African descent” specifically for those having links with African heritage. The terms “new generations” and “Italians of African descent” are examples of what emerges from a self-definition process. The use of “new” alongside “generation” conveys notions of change, innovation, and potential enhancement, dissociating the content from its migrant origin. Choosing “new generations” implicitly legitimizes and recognizes the children of immigrants as citizens of the societies in which they were born or raised. Likewise, the merge of nationality (Italian) and origin (African descent) indicates that the foreign markers linked to their background do not hinder the self-embrace of Italy as part of identity. In contrast, the term “immigrant minors” accentuates diversity, distance, and non-involvement of individuals in the territories they reside.



These terminological choices carry distinct undertones, influencing the interpretation of the phenomenon surrounding the children of immigrants, therefore there is the need for conceptual caution and potential innovation. However, in alignment with the motives of scholars like Thomassen (2010) and Riniolo (2019), this work employs the term “second-generation immigrants” where needed, as its prevalence in the academic field makes it a more understandable descriptor for the referred population. In using this term, unless further specification is provided, reference is made both to descendants of immigrants who are born in the country their parents have settled in as well as to those who migrated with their parents at a very young age. While still using the expression “second-generation immigrants”, it has just been noted how this is a debatable term, therefore with the aim of minimizing its use, the expression “young people of African descent” will be prominently used in this work. Given that this group is the central focus of this thesis, it is feasible to refer to the offspring of African immigrants in this manner. Nevertheless, it is essential to recognize that this term is limited in scope and can only be applied when referring to this specific group. Thus, it does not serve as a comprehensive alternative for individuals falling under the broader category of “second-generation immigrants” which does not account for the country of origin. Furthermore, to move away from the perception of foreignness often linked to children of immigrants who either never migrated or did so at a young age, alternative perspectives can be explored by considering their counterparts. Counterparts, in this context, refer to individuals who share a similar age group and are children of couples who are native to the country in which they were born. On this note, when comparing data between offspring of immigrants and offspring of natives, the latter will be categorized as “European-by-origin” or “Italian-by-origin” depending on the specific scenario. This perspective introduces the notion that individuals can be considered European or Italian either by their parents’ origin or by acquisition, reflecting the country in which they are born, raised, and acculturated.

Having explored the concepts of migration and integration as they pertain to second-generation immigrants, it emerges that the terminology employed to characterize this demographic significantly influences identity and societal perceptions. By building upon this subchapter’s discussion, the following will delve deeper into these dynamics, providing a closer examination of societal dynamics and their implications.

### **Box 1.2: Bellamy OgaK: creating a space to be seen**

Born and raised in Italy to parents from South Sudan and Uganda, Bellamy OgaK is the founder and editor-in-chief of *AfroItalian Souls*, a digital platform established in 2016. Through this platform, she endeavors to amplify the voices and experiences of Afro-Italians, addressing the prevalent lack of representation and recognition within institutions, society, and traditional media. In response to the issue of invisibility, there is a shared interest in advocating for increased representation, particularly for Afro-Italians pursuing or having pursued high-level studies. *AfroItalian Souls* shares articles containing socio-political reflections within the Italian context, covering current trends, and showcasing new Afro-Italians talents.

*Source: ("Bellamy OgaK: 'Il colore della pelle parla per te'", La 27Ora. 2022).*  
<https://www.corriere.it/video-articoli/2022/10/12/bellamy-ogak-l-italia-paese-razzista-colore-pelle-parla-te/5f4f9690-3f06-11ed-b6e3-34338f1c69a0.shtml>

### **1.3 Social context: views on integration and exclusion**

Having examined the definitions that highlight the interconnectedness between migration and integration relating to second-generation immigrants, the exploration now moves into a micro-macro dynamics slant. Otherwise stated, the previous analysis allowed to consider the significant impact that labels can have, and building upon this knowledge the aim is to investigate the experiences of second-generation immigrants tracing their journey from an individual level to the broader societal context. For this reason, the study will delve into the complexities of identity and the interplay of integration and exclusion. To aid this analysis, a focus on the Italian scenario will prove useful.

Identity holds a significant role in discussions about integration and exclusion given that it acts as a crucial concept that shapes the sense of belonging. In its turn, belonging emerges as a central argument in discussions about integration and exclusion because it is influenced by how individuals, particularly second-generation immigrants in

this context, perceive themselves in relation to the communities they are part of and the way in which these communities perceive and accept them. The degree to which individuals are integrated into society often depends on their ability to assert their identity unaffectedly while adapting to social norms and expectations. Conversely, experiences of exclusion may occur when individuals feel marginalized or alienated due to perceived differences in identity. In IMISCOE Research *The European Second Generation Compared* (Crul et al., 2012) it is stated that the difficulty in understanding identities lies in how this view is tied to specific contexts and how expressions of identity vary within those contexts. Identities, seen as labels that signify belonging to certain categories, may not always reflect actual cultural and social practices even though they are closely connected to them. It is for this reason, that different categories of belonging gain meaning in social contexts. This also highlights the diverse and context-dependent nature of an individual's multiple identities, such as gender, family roles, and occupation. Upon this, it can be argued that a closer look at the intricacies of identity leads to integration challenges that extend beyond newcomers to include descendants of earlier immigrants. The same ones whose rich cultural and social experiences fail to be fully captured because minimized with the label of "second-generation immigrants". This prompts further investigation into identity formation and the repercussions of assimilation or integration on second-generation immigrants. Given that second-generation immigrants are often likened to immigrants, it becomes crucial to comprehend the assimilation process expected of migrants, which, in turn, facilitates an understanding of the expectations imposed on the second generations. To enhance this focus, Thomassen's insights into assimilation models and their connection to the Italian context will be instrumental. In his article "*Second generation immigrants*" or "*Italians with immigrant parents*"? (2010) he states that earlier assimilation models posited that over time, migrant and minority populations would either blend with the majority culture or face marginalization, however real-life dynamics have proven a different outcome. In alignment with the segmented assimilation theory, developed to explain the diversified identities in the American context, the extreme diversity and segmentation in American society suggested that new immigrants may assimilate into different social and ethnic groups, leading to diverse assimilation paths. These paths include conventional upward or "straight-line" assimilation, downward assimilation, and "selective acculturation". They respectively

denote a type of assimilation where there is linear progression, one that reflects a decline in status and one that allows individuals to choose elements from both original and host cultures. In essence, assimilation is occurring, but it may not necessarily be toward a national majority culture. As previously mentioned, the American context favors an assimilation process where the European context puts forward an integration one. Nonetheless the broader view on segmented assimilation and the selective acculturation type function as a bridge to the Italian case which Thomassen observes (2010).

Although Italy lacks distinct ethnic neighborhoods, the concentration of various ethnic or national groups in specific sectors of the economy suggests a form of integration through ethnic networking. The prevalent use of communication technologies enables contemporary immigrants to maintain stronger ties with their home countries compared to a century ago, influencing the dynamics of integration into the Italian context. These dynamics then affect the identity formation of new generations, caught between the larger society and their foreign connections. This conflict amplifies when integration challenges faced by the first generation surprisingly resurface for the second generation, with potential increases in feelings of discrimination taking root. As a matter of fact, immigrants' dissatisfaction, indicated by their self-declared "life satisfaction", often persists over time and across generations (Safia as cited in Thomassen, 2010). There is the need to highlight the shift in expectations between first-generation immigrants and their second-generation counterparts, with the latter anticipating similar opportunities and treatment as their Italian-by origin peers. While the first generation might have been more accepting of discrimination, the second generation expects equal treatment. However, the mismatch between these expectations and societal categorization as immigrants creates a discrepancy. The focus on being "culturally split" (Thomassen, 2010) might overlook the core tension which is the disparity between aspirations and actual experiences in society. This very notion is further expanded in Thomassen's following statement.

The first generation may have experienced discrimination, but they may also have been more willing to 'accept it'. To a surprising degree, however, discrimination along racial lines is inherited. Simply put, 2G immigrants, in contrast to their parents, expect to be treated like anybody else in Italy. Yet these expectations may not match their experiences, especially as long as the 'host society' keeps categorising them as immigrants. In the 2G literature, there is much focus on being 'culturally split'. However, if 2G immigrants sometimes have to seek a compromise between their personal aspirations and their parents'

expectations, this compromise is also one negotiated in the context of one's peer groups, outside the family environment; in other words, it may be that the real 'tension', or 'split' is not at all between two generations, or between one or the other 'culture', but between a person's expectations and a person's actual experiences in society. Perhaps we are creating a 'cultural split' as a false analytical assumption, not realising that what 2G immigrants want is a normal life: the 'split' is that discrepancy between 'rhetoric and reality' (Rumbaut, 1997) and no cultural or generational cleavage (Thomassen, 2010).

In order to have a better view of matters of disparity, it is useful to delve furthermore on the aspect of discrimination. The second generation stands out as a group encountering notable levels of perceived discrimination, evidenced by the Fundamental Rights Report of the EU agency for fundamental rights that Riniolo draws from (2019). The interviewees recount experiencing discrimination on religious and ethnic-racial grounds, with children of immigrants from North Africa facing particularly concerning results compared to the first-generation from the same regions. Instances of daily racism, with subtle everyday manifestation that affect especially young people of African descent and young girls wearing the veil, highlight challenges in accessing job opportunities and career advancement. Nonetheless, in response to widespread racism and discrimination, some young women in Italy, as elsewhere, have devised innovative forms of resistance. Aesthetic practices, such as embracing the veil or celebrating Afro-textured hair, serve as tools for asserting identity, challenging prevailing beauty standards, and fostering collective awareness among young people of African descent against experiences of daily racism (Riniolo, 2019).

As mentioned in the first subchapter, the notion of "second-generation immigrants" is a relatively recent concept in Italy and it emerges against the backdrop of the broader discourse on immigration that gained prominence in the early 1990s. Hence it is only now that native Italians are beginning to recognize the presence of children of immigrant children and a significant number of Italians perceive the ongoing influx of immigration into the country as a challenge leading to the mentioned episodes of discrimination and racism. Thomassen (2010) affirms that the interplay of radicalization and disengagement, seemingly at odds, creates an environment conducive to racism and intolerance. This is intensified by instances of violence involving second-generation immigrants, who find themselves alternately as perpetrators and victims. Nonetheless it should be noted that the trajectory of Italian society relies not only on the integration of

first-generation immigrants but also, more crucially in the long term, on the legal, social, and cultural processes concerning second-generation immigrants. This rapidly growing demographic represents a group that will eventually leave a lasting influence on the Italian society yet struggles with the conflict of being citizens while persistently viewed as immigrants.

This tug of war is the breeding ground to examine the concept of identity in relation to being Italian, condensed by the notion of “Italianness” (Andall, 2002). Indeed, it is reasonable to posit whether there can be a simultaneity between being African, with reference to the specific focus group of this work, and being Italian given that this concept is still viewed as a marginal one in the contemporary Italian scene. In particular, the emergence of Afro-Italians is seen to disrupt established ideas surrounding Italianness. Questions arise regarding the sense of belonging among these young Afro-Italians, the extent of their ethnic self-awareness, and the societal signals they receive regarding their inclusion as citizens. This links back to the topic of identity and sense of belonging further observed from the sources mentioned by Professor Andall (2002) and findings in the 2020 ISTAT report (Conti et al, 2020). From this it appears that the discourse surrounding the identity and sense of belonging among second-generation individuals is rich and interdisciplinary, to the extent that scholars in diverse fields give their take on this topic. Scholars have coined terms like “suspended identities” and “identity hybridization” to capture the complex process of identity formation for these youth (Andall, 2002). Considering foreign born youth, the state of identity oscillates with some feeling Italian, others foreign, and some finding it challenging to express their affiliation. It should be pointed out that the perception of belonging is closely linked to the age of arrival to Italy, adding complexity to the experiences of second-generation individuals who are in the journey of navigating their sense of self and societal integration. Additionally, self-awareness on ethnic identity varies based on the social contexts that shape identity formation. This challenges the view of ethnicity and identity as fixed concepts and promotes the idea of multiple identities or belongings navigated within family and society.

Interviews carried out by Jacqueline Andall with young Afro-Italians in Milan shed light on the mentioned challenge in self-definition (2002). The prevalent perception that being black and being Italian are mutually exclusive categories was further reiterated

through the often-expressed desire to leave the country. Andall suggests that this inclination could be attributed to their social experiences in Milan, to the awareness of greater opportunities elsewhere, and the visibility or invisibility of black individuals in Milan. Interestingly, when it comes to self-definition, young Afro-Italians seem more comfortable acknowledging European aspects of their identity than specifically Italian ones. Considering the hope of encountering more favorable opportunities in countries where discrimination does not act as a stumbling block, these notions are reflected in the stories of onward migration illustrated in Box 3.4. Having in mind that the article written by Andall reporting her interviews dates to 2002 and the selected stories in Box 3.4 date to 2017, it is inferred that certain challenges detected by the author have been long-lasting. Nonetheless, it is safe to say that some changes have taken place in the past decades. As Andall rightly guessed, due to the fluid and ongoing dynamics of identities, the generation of Afro-Italians she interfaced with leaned towards expressing an African identity, yet future generations would identify more strongly with an Italian identity if it became more inclusive. Indeed, just the fact young people of African descent today are uniting under collective labels such as Afro-Italian and Black Italian denotes a shift.

The non-exclusive perception of African and Italian heritage circles back to the complexity of multiple belongings. Insofar as it has been mentioned that the responsibility for the integration of immigrants also rests on the new generation, a critique is directed towards this viewpoint. The concern at heart is seamlessly expressed in the earlier on mentioned *The European Second Generation Compared*, as it is stated that “The second generation is not torn between two cultures, nor caught between two worlds. For children of immigrants, ‘home’ is where they were born and raised. Yet, differing from the experience of children of native born parentage, the second generation has another ‘ethno-national’ reference frame: their parents’ country (and culture) of origin” (Crul et al., 2012). From this argument it is possible to advance that it is counterproductive to carry forward views concerning the need for integration or assimilation of individuals whose dual ethno-national background should not exclude them from membership and belonging to society, the very society in which they were born or raised from tender age. Stories like that of Anna Osei mentioned in Box 1.3 exemplify the efforts of certain second-generation immigrants to maintain their cultural roots as a valuable addition to the society they identify with and equally embrace. Nonetheless it is challenges like those

related to citizenship rights that stress on the persistent nature of exclusion, extending beyond the capacity of the excluded individuals to resolve these issues.

At present, minors of migrant descent are able to attain citizenship only through the transmission of rights from their parents and this fuels the discussion concerning the *ius soli* and *ius sanguinis* laws (Conti et al., 2020; Milan, 2022). The principle of *ius soli* grants automatic citizenship to all children born within the national territory, while the *ius sanguinis* confers citizenship rights only to the offspring of existing citizens. Originally introduced to accommodate the children of Italian nationals who had migrated, contributing to the country through remittances, the *ius sanguinis* principle has resulted in a significant disparity in access to citizenship rights. Italians by descent need to reside in Italy for only 3 years to gain citizenship, whereas individuals of non-Italian descent living in Italy must meet a residency requirement of at least 10 years which would then be transmitted to children of minor age. It is inferred that current legislation does not particularly consider the case of second-generation immigrants, but it is due to the fact that, as already mentioned, the initial wave of migration to Italy in the 1980s and 1990s was perceived as a temporary and transitory phenomenon, involving individuals expected to return to their home countries at some point. It was not anticipated that the offspring of these immigrants would be born and raised in Italy, and this matter has still not been thoroughly elucidated also because of the politicization of the migration discourse which marginalizes discussions around new Italians. This is exemplified by the fact that when the campaign for citizenship law reform coincided with the refugee crisis of 2015 the discussions were not considered individually, instead the crisis contributed to the stigmatization of immigrants in Italy. Then in 2017 the right-wing League party's ascension over the center-right coalition fueled the revival of anti-immigrant rhetoric, leading furthermore to the merge of second-generation immigrants with the broader immigrant category (Milan, 2022).

Given that the debate on citizenship is conflated to that of identity, it holds relevance for second-generation immigrants. Of particular concern is the lack of identity recognition from the country that has become theirs, as well as the constraints imposed by current legislation in bureaucratic matters. The lack of entitlement to the same citizenship rights that Italian-by-origin have leads to a perceived discrimination in terms of access to legal rights. For this reason, the discourse on the acquisition of Italian



citizenship by second-generation immigrants intersects significantly with their pivotal role in political activism.

**Box 1.3: Anna Osei: preserving roots while breaking societal barriers**

It is quite interesting to notice how women’s magazines are evolving into platforms that shed light on the narratives of established Afro-descendants while also pushing emerging Afro-Italians into the limelight. Vogue magazine stands out as a notable example of this engagement.

In 2022, the Bulgari B.zero1 Aurora Awards, in collaboration with Vogue Italia, sought to celebrate a new generation of talented, inclusive, and diverse women. Edward Enninful, the Editor-in-Chief of British Vogue and European Editorial Director of Vogue, conferred the Journalism category award to Anna Osei, a young Afro-Italian writer. Osei, an Italian Ghanaian and Vogue Italia contributor, serves as a beacon for emerging talents. With books like *Destinazione Sostanza* and *Sotto lo stesso sole*, respectively “Destination substance” and “Under the same sun” in English, she delves into the themes of African diaspora, racism, and the preservation of cultural roots in a globalized society. As a trailblazer who undoes societal barriers, Osei, a graduate in International Law, is also involved with the In-Formazione association, dedicated to bridging the gap between the professional world and cultural diversity

Source: (Di Federico, 2022. “Edward Enninful OBE premia la scrittrice Anna Osei ai Bulgari B.zero1 Aurora Awards”. *Vogue Italia*).

<https://www.vogue.it/news/article/edward-enninful-anna-osei-bulgari>

In the following chapter, the work carried out by new Italians will be investigated and complemented with Boxes 2.3. and 2.4. that consider the role of civil society organizations and politically active individuals. These individuals indeed are actively asserting themselves as protagonists, reclaiming a discourse that has frequently overlooked and mismatched their perspective. In agreement with Riniolo’s (2019) and Milan’s (2022) observations, this uneven perception is caused by the fact that the discourse on second-generation immigrants is interwoven with the broader immigration

debate, therefore public opinion tends to perceive youth of migrant descent as not fully Italian and to erroneously associate them with the stigmatized group of immigrants. Merging the issues relating to newcomers with issues concerning those who are already established and embedded in the Italian society is perceived as a source of confusion in public opinion, therefore young activists fervently stress the need to separate the discourse on Italian citizenship from broader migrant rights, arguing that this juxtaposition is a stumbling block to their campaign. In their political actions it is unveiled that they are deliberately distancing and staunchly opposing the view that attaches the label of migrants to them.

Overall, the examination of the social context for second-generation immigrants highlights the complex dynamics of migration, identity, and societal perceptions. Labels significantly impact the sense of belonging and societal acceptance, with terms like “second-generation immigrants” pressing on identity complexities. Moreso, the unaccepted dichotomy of citizenship and immigrant categorization drives second-generation immigrants into political activism. This underlines the need to comprehend the distinct challenges faced by the second generation in Italy, and Europe at large, as this is a demographic contributing unique narratives and representations yet confronted with an exclusion that fosters a sense of unfairness, both due to identity matters and bureaucratic challenges. This feeling accentuates the recognized need in second-generation immigrants for significant representation of their identities and therefore their narratives. With the awareness of a potential lack of visibility, young individuals of African descent have proactively established their own platforms to ensure their stories are acknowledged and amplified. An example of this movement is seen in Italy with the “Afroitalians Souls” blog of which more is told in Box 1.2. The embedded urge to have their narratives heard and their voices recognized, aligns with the concept of social climbers brought by Dustmann and Frattini (2011b) and the overall scope of this work. The identification of second-generation immigrants as individuals seeking upward mobility within societal structures leads to question how EU policies facilitate or hinder their trajectories in the EU. Building on the insights from this chapter, the subsequent chapter will delve precisely into this exploration.

## Chapter 2: Policy Frameworks and Key Actors

### 2.1. EU policies on migrants' integration

In the previous chapter, the exploration of the terminological background regarding second-generation immigrants took into account the overarching theme of migration, given that it is evident that the discourse on young people with migratory descent is interconnected with all aspects related to migration. Similarly, due to the absence of specific policies that explicitly address the situations of young people of migratory descent, there is the need to understand more about EU migration policies to detect how they impact second-generation immigrants, also in their quest for belonging. Therefore, this section will delve into the legal foundation of European migration policies with a foundational background that will build on Blanca Garcés-Mascreñas and Rinus Penninx's book *Integration processes and policies in Europe: Contexts, levels and actors* with contributions from several authors (2016).

As a starting point, it is needed to define the legal underpinnings of European migration policies. For ease of reference this thesis will consider the classifications adopted by Liza Mügge and Marleen van der Haar (2016) when categorizing immigrants and trying to understand who are the groups requiring integration according to EU policies. As a first distinction there are individuals EU citizens on one hand and Third-Country Nationals (TCNs) on the other. TCNs are then categorized according to labels that motivate their admission to Europe. Each label signifies a unique journey into Europe which carries specific implications for the treatment, rights, and integration experiences reflecting diverse circumstances and legal statuses. To explore the implications and potential downturns of the various labels there is the need to address each of them. First of all, there are labor migrants often admitted based on workforce needs. Their impact lies in the contribution to the labor market, addressing specific skill shortages, and potentially boosting economic growth. However, challenges may arise related to labor rights, social integration, and potential exploitation. There are then asylum seekers, which

are individuals fleeing persecution or violence. Their admission calls humanitarian considerations and requires evaluating the integration challenges that may arise due to the trauma of forced migration, legal uncertainties, and societal acceptance. Family migrants are then those who access a host country based on family reunification with the aim of maintaining family unity and fostering social cohesion to countermand challenges such as dependency concerns, cultural adjustments, and potential strains on social services. Moving on, refugees are those forced to flee due to persecution, conflict, or violence. Once again, the impact is humanitarian and addresses immediate safety needs which then require to deal with trauma, cultural adaptation, and societal acceptance. In conclusion, postcolonial migrants are those who may have historical ties to former colonial powers (Mügge and van der Haar, 2016). In their cases there is the need to address historical injustices and foster multiculturalism that would promote equal opportunities over historical inequalities.

The varied composition of TCNs sheds lights on the complexities and challenges inherent in integration policies which require distinct routes identified by Mügge and van der Haar (2016) as Route 2a and Route 2b. Route 2a is tailored for legal immigrants and targets integration policy with a focus also on gender-specific policies designed for migrant women. This route recognizes and emphasizes the agency, resilience, and substantial contributions of migrant women to society. Gender-specific policies aim to address the unique challenges faced by women in the migration process, acknowledging their diverse roles in both the family and the broader community. Concurrently, route 2b explores the obstacles encountered by legal immigrants in obtaining long-term residence permits due to bureaucratic challenges and legal complexities, ultimately making them targets of return policies. This route unfolds debates surrounding ethical implications and potential human rights violations inherent in return policies which potentially threaten integration processes.

TCNs situation is mirrored against that of EU citizens who benefit of the principle of free movement, a cornerstone of European migration policy. Such principle is the results of key agreements established over time. The Schengen Agreement (as cited in Mügge and van der Haar, 2016), signed in 1985 and implemented in 1995, facilitates passport-free travel across participating European countries, creating a border-free zone. The Dublin Convention (as cited in Mügge and van der Haar, 2016), established in 1990

and replaced by the Dublin Regulation in 2003, determines the EU member state responsible for processing asylum applications. It aims to prevent multiple applications and ensure a coherent asylum process. The Maastricht Treaty (as cited in Mügge and van der Haar, 2016), signed in 1992, lays the foundation for the European Union, introducing the concept of European citizenship and expanding cooperation beyond economic matters to include political and social integration. Understanding the ease guaranteed to EU citizens juxtaposed to that of TCNs, it is evident how it is an issue for second-generations immigrants without EU citizenship to have to deal with the struggles of TCNs while expecting to be fully considered as citizen. The consequence of this discomfort will be viewed later on.

Moving further, the “Europeanization of immigration policies” (Scholten and Penninx, 2016) denotes how approaches are intended to be harmonized among EU member states in manifold ways. In particular this sees the integration of EU-level decisions into national policies, fostering joint efforts in areas like border controls, asylum procedures, and labor migration for a unified approach to migration challenges. This process aims to establish a cohesive and equitable framework across the EU. The Europeanization of immigration policies represents a transformative shift in the 2010s, marked by the increasing influence of European-level decisions on national frameworks. Noteworthy developments include collaborative efforts in joint border controls to address common challenges and ensure effective border management. Harmonization of asylum procedures reflects a commitment to a cohesive and fair method, emphasizing shared responsibility and common standards. In labor migration, EU coordination aims to facilitate worker mobility and equitable treatment. Family reunification policies also experience Europeanization, balancing the facilitation of family unity with addressing demographic shifts. These patterns illustrate the interplay of conflicts and negotiations between national and EU interests, shaping a more unified policy field.

Scholten and Penninx (2016) note that the aim of a unified policy is actualized in the Europeanization of immigration policies which extends to have local impact as seen with major urban centers such as Berlin, Amsterdam, and London acting as exemplars of realities actively embracing diversity as a core element of their identity. These cities are acknowledged for their distinctive local integration policies, which stand out for their adaptability to diversity and their pragmatic response to cultural and religious needs. This

active embrace involves policies and practices that go beyond mere tolerance, aiming to create inclusive environments that value and appreciate differences in culture, ethnicity, religion, and other aspects of identity. It signifies a commitment to nurturing a sense of belonging for all residents, regardless of their background, and recognizing diversity as a strength that enriches the social fabric of the city (Scholten and Penninx, 2016). On this note, the phenomenon of onward migration mentioned in chapter two gains strength because it reveals how cities that prove to be welcoming and inclusive are deemed a greener pasture for second-generation immigrants who do not feel recognized in a country they'd wish to fully consider as theirs. Indeed, the local perspective on immigration policies tells of why there are differences across the EU. In larger cities there is increased autonomy of local governments who depart from centralized decision-making, allowing local authorities to develop integration philosophies that can cater to the specific needs of their context. The influence of local factors, including political circumstances and social situations, plays a crucial role in shaping these localized integration policies.

Having viewed how migration policies are conceived to also deal with integration, it should be mentioned that political debates on integration actually revolve around two primary views as outlined by Ilke Adam and Daniel Thym (2019). The first emphasizes integration as full equality, focusing on addressing structural disadvantages that migrants face in societal fields whereas the second highlights the need for a shared sense of togetherness in addition to equal treatment. Within the EU, the legitimacy of both these different positions is acknowledged, and options for compromise are recognized. When looking at the Common Basic Principles for Immigrant Integration Policy in the EU (EU Commission as cited in Adam and Thym, 2019), integration is seen as equal participation in societal domains even though current EU-level indicators reveal that policies do not necessarily lead to more equality on the ground. In light of this, on a factual basis, the aim of policies shifts from demanding equal rights to achieving effective outcomes encouraging equality by addressing institutional, and therefore systematic, racism. To attain such outcomes the European Network Against Racism (ENAR as cited by Adam and Thym, 2019) provides suggestions that include reinforcing anti-discrimination policies, replacing integration with equality, and implementing National Action Plans Against Racism, or NAPARs, (ENAR as cited by Adam and Thym, 2019) as would be developed by involving affected communities. Another perspective views integration as

an incomplete agreement since it combines explicit and implicit rules across various policy areas (Adam and Thym, 2019). This leads to note that the relation between the patent and latent leads to envision different ideas about the meaning and implementation of integration. It also gives room to acknowledge the multifaceted nature of integration which encircles individual liberty, societal commitment, and togetherness. Indeed, the nature of migrant integration policies demands an approach that fosters cross-cultural coherence across sectors.

The above exploration leads to the understanding that there are no policies that specifically address the situation of second-generation immigrants in Europe and this absence is discussed in a policy brief by researchers Maryna Manchenko and Laura Westerveen (2019) as they contemplate the challenges faced by children of immigrants belonging to “generation 1.5” and “generation 2.0”, particularly in the context of integration policies within the European Union. As viewed in chapter one (Rambaut as cited in Andall, 2002), 1.5 and 2.0 represent the strict categorization of children of immigrants who migrated between the ages of 6 and 12 and those who were born in the country the parents migrated to. The invisibility of generation 1.5 in EU policies is highlighted as they are often classified as first-generation immigrants, neglecting their diverse needs. Moreover, the burden of integration is noted to extend to generation 2.0, born in the host country, despite their different experiences (Manchenko and Westerveen, 2019). As will be further noted in chapter 3, there are persisting inequalities that are emphasized, with comparative research revealing gaps in employment rates and school performances between people with and without a migration background. The disparities exist both for the first generation of immigrants and their children, even though in diverse measure. Indeed, European countries exhibit less favorable education and labor market outcomes for these generations compared to their peers with native-born parents.

The specific outlook on second generations prompts to consider that having taken into account migration and integration affairs, it is also pertinent to analyze policy impact relating to youths as they eventually influence at large young people with migratory descent. To view this, the 2009 European Commission’s communication *An EU Strategy for Youth – Investing and Empowering: A renewed open method of coordination to address youth challenges and opportunities* (EU Commission, 2009) sheds light on soft policy instruments and initiatives that can somehow correlate with the needs of second-

generation immigrants in Europe. The EU Commission's communication emphasizes the importance of young people as a critical resource and betterment to society and thus need to be aided by paying attention to their challenges. In detailing the challenges and opportunities that today's youth encounter, the communication highlights demographic changes, including a decrease in the percentage of the 15-29 age group. Key challenges are identified such as globalization, climate change, energy security, and the imperative for young individuals to acquire key competences. The issues of early school leaving, education, employment, social inclusion, and health are addressed as specific concerns affecting young people. To address this, the communication (EU Commission, 2009) evaluates existing EU cooperation on youth policies, acknowledging positive aspects while also signaling areas requiring improvement. On this note, the necessity for a new framework to address the multifaceted challenges and opportunities which the youth in Europe face is stressed upon with the aim of investing in and empowering the youth by adopting a long-term approach with short-term priorities which capture several goals. First of all, the communication (EU Commission, 2009) makes mention of the need of creating more opportunities for youth in education and employment, thus directing challenges in education, the significance of non-formal education and skills development is particularly underlined. In light of this, objectives and actions are put forth related to non-formal learning, skills validation, learning mobility, and combating gender stereotypes. Working on these aspects is projected to facilitate an improved access and full participation of all young people in society. The strategy outlined in the communication seeks to enhance the involvement of young people in society, focusing on encouraging healthy living, preventing obesity, promoting physical education, and ensuring full participation in civic and political life. Lastly there is the aim of fostering mutual solidarity between society and young people as the need for societal solidarity towards disadvantaged youth is highlighted. To make all these aims achievable, the communication considers the need for a cross-sectoral approach in youth policy affirming the importance of structured dialogue with youth, peer-learning processes, and evidence-based policymaking.

Having made a roundup of the various points that are addressed, this section intends to detect how the focus on youth in a broader view indirectly touches points that are crucial and specific to the second generation. Indeed, the communication recognizes



the challenges of social inclusion which is an issue that is directly relevant to the second generation of immigrants. By addressing unemployment and education, key factors influencing the cohesion of second generations within the various European societies are regarded. Specifically, the communication makes mention of the need to access quality education which is crucial for integration and cohesion. Furthermore, with peer-learning processes and specific initiatives which emphasize the role of youth work in supporting the transition from youth to adulthood, youth work can play a pivotal role in addressing challenges related to identity, cultural integration, and societal engagement. Lastly, the communication does acknowledge the diverse backgrounds of young people in Europe and this recognition sees an effort in understanding the unique experiences and contributions of the second generation to the European social landscape.

Further considering the lack of specific policies addressing the condition of second-generation immigrants, a brief focus on funding can aid to understand potential challenges in covering the aspect just mentioned. Pierre Georges Van Wolleghem examines the financing of EU migration policies within the broader context of the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) for the years 2021-2027 (as cited in Van Wolleghem, 2019). 2018 EU Parliament data (as cited in Van Wolleghem, 2019) reveal a surge in resources allocated to EU migration policies with a noteworthy 36% increase for migration and asylum policies and a substantial 197% increase for border management within the proposed MFF. Such increase is particularly significant as it has an unprecedented scale comparing with historical trends in budgetary allocations for migration policies. This interlaces with the greater focus on understanding the integration of foreigners seen on the mainstreaming of integration into social policies financed by the European Social Fund Plus, or ESF+ (as cited in Adam and Thym, 2019). Inasmuch as this tells of a greater attention placed on migration and the necessity of integration a questioned is raised due to the absence of a minimum spending threshold (Van Wolleghem, 2019) which could potentially lead to having member states exercising discretion in setting priorities. Suggestions on the way forward will be later on evidenced after having had a greater frame that includes the governance dynamics of migrant's integration and the role of key actors.

In this section, the analysis allowed to explore the EU's approach to immigrant integration, emphasizing legal foundations, categorizations of individuals, and challenges

faced by second-generation immigrants. It shed light on the process of Europeanization of immigration policies, highlighting harmonization efforts and the active embrace of diversity in major urban centers. The absence of specific policies for second-generation immigrants and funding allocations within the Multiannual Financial Framework were discussed, emphasizing the need for an inclusive approach to address the unique needs of young people of African descent. Such consideration gives way to investigating further the functioning of policies by understanding their governance as will be observed in the next section.

## **2.2 The governance of migrants' integration**

Proceeding with the exploration of EU policies on migrants' integration, there is the need to understand the governance surrounding such policies meaning the way in which they are structured and implemented, involving inquiring relationships at national, regional, and local levels. This multilevel relationship happens as a result of the inclusion of diverse actors, from private institutions to NGOs and immigrant organizations whose respective works adds a layer of complexities around policies that are meant to go beyond formal documents.

The involvement of the EU in migrants' integration policies represents a relatively recent development compared to efforts related to migration and asylum. While there is not a common European policy for migrants' integration, there have been directives, principles, and soft governance measures aligning with the European Commission's work to foster city networks which will be soon after explained. These efforts contribute to the emergence of a multilevel governance framework, encompassing both horizontal cooperation between cities and vertical connections to the Commission. As pointed out by Adam and Thym (2019) the governance of migrants' integration within the EU is characterized by the cooperative action between national governments, civil society organizations, and the overarching EU framework abiding to the Treaty of Lisbon (as cited in Scholten and Penninx, 2016; as cited in Adam and Thym 2019) which serves as the foundational document, delineating the boundaries of EU involvement while emphasizing the autonomy of member states in shaping their integration policies. This is further guided by the conclusions deriving from the 1999 Tampere European Council (as

cited in Adam and Thym 2019) which called for stronger migrants' integration policy to go alongside the use of soft policy instruments aimed at fostering social cohesion. Indeed, the EU's approach to immigrant integration involves an interaction of legislative frameworks and soft policy instruments with a strategy that operates within the legal, social, economic, and cultural domains. Considering the exclusion of direct harmonization of national legislation there are various tools that the EU makes use of which are outlined by Adam and Thym (2019). This multifaceted approach stipulates firstly the supranational legislative framework to provide the basis for integration policies, positioning the EU as a higher authority that governs member states collectively. Secondly, soft policy instruments, which are not legally binding, complement legislative efforts, reflecting the EU's commitment to a multifaceted integration strategy that gives space for flexibility and adaptability while pursuing common goals. These instruments encompass guidelines, recommendations, and initiatives specifically aimed at fostering social cohesion. Thirdly, the emergence of new institutional structures facilitates multilevel governance, extending the integration process to transnational collaboration. Lastly, the Migration and Development Framework, also M&D, (as cited in King and Collyer, 2016; as cited in Adam and Thym, 2019) emphasizes the interconnectedness of migration and development, recognizing countries of origin as essential actors in immigrants' integration.

Due to the authority conceded for local management, a key focus lies in examining variations in local integration policies across the EU. This examination is driven by the pragmatic necessity to navigate ethnic differences within diverse communities. Local factors, including political circumstances and social situations, contribute significantly to the formulation of unique integration strategies at grassroot level. These variations shed light on the diverse approaches taken by different localities, emphasizing the adaptability and context-specific nature of governance in managing migration. The exploration takes place within the broader context of the EU's shift towards a more inclusive perspective on integration, aligning with the understanding of the evolving demographic landscape of European cities in diverse ways. As Scholten and Penninx (2016) discuss, major urban centers are currently undergoing a heightened diversity that encompasses not only ethnic but also religious and cultural variations. They further emphasize that the demographic shift challenges the conventional concept of a homogenous cultural norm and calls for a

reevaluation of integration criteria. Such transformative perspective reflects the EU's commitment to a comprehensive and inclusive integration strategy that adapts to the changing dynamics of its societies. As localities grapple with the pragmatic need to manage ethnic differences, the EU's overarching recognizes the importance of flexibility and context specificity in governance, acknowledging the multifaceted nature of migration management.

Nevertheless, the local realm remains intricately connected to the multilevel governance system, which, in the context of migration policy, navigates the intricate dynamics between national and EU entities. This interconnection reveals an evolving landscape where integration policies are balanced across different administrative levels. Scholten and Penninx (2016) detect that cities play a pivotal role in this complex scenario as they engage in formulating and implementing migration-related strategies. In this, the European Commission assumes a central role, actively fostering city networks to facilitate collaboration and information exchange. This proactive engagement plays a key role in building a multilevel governance framework that not only promotes horizontal cooperation among cities but also establishes vertical connections with the Commission. Horizontal cooperation among cities underscores a collaborative approach, where urban centers share insights, best practices, and challenges related to migration. This facilitates a dynamic exchange of knowledge and solutions tailored to local contexts. Simultaneously, the vertical connections to the European Commission provide a channel for cities to participate in broader policy discussions, aligning local efforts with EU directives. This multilevel governance framework reflects a well-thought strategy to address the multifaceted aspects of migration. It acknowledges the diverse needs and contexts of different urban centers while promoting cohesive and harmonized policies at the European level. The governance dynamics within this framework serve as a strategic response to complex challenges posed by migration, recognizing the significance of localized understandings and broader collaborative efforts. Challenges, however, also arise within the context of managing migration in a globalized world (Scholten and Penninx, 2016). These challenges cover a broad spectrum, ranging from legal and bureaucratic difficulties to socio-cultural dimensions. With this awareness, policymakers are confronted with valuable insights, contributing to a more informed and effective approach to governing migration and its inherent complexities.

Such awareness is also reflected in the previously mentioned Migration and Development Framework (as cited in King and Collyer, 2016; as cited in Adam and Thym, 2019) which emphasizes exactly the interconnectedness of migration and development. This framework recognizes countries of origin as essential actors in immigrants' integration, marking a departure from traditional paradigms. The EU's recognition of the importance of countries of origin stresses on a shift towards a more inclusive perspective on integration. Academic research also stresses on the relevance of integration for development in origin countries and the need for a simultaneous examination of integration processes across different contexts (Russell and Collyer, 2016). This evolving EU perspective aligns with the changing demographic landscape of European cities which, as aforementioned, are experiencing increased diversity in ethnicity, religion, and culture. The traditional yardstick for measuring integration, focusing on social relationships with people of native descent, is challenged by the reality of multi-ethnic groups, especially among the second generation. Furthermore, the governance of migrants' integration extends beyond the confines of European borders. With the establishment of bilateral institutional structures between emigration and immigration countries there is the envisioning of a significant advancement towards global collaboration. Despite the political push driving the EU's recognition of countries of origin, academic input has not explicitly featured in the European Commission's documents. For this reason, as highlighted by Russell and Collyer (2016) researchers have indeed stressed time over time the relevance of integration for development in countries of origin, advocating for a simultaneous examination of integration processes in the place of origin, destination, and within transnational migrant communities.

Given that the EU outlines broad principles and goals for integration, a critical aspect that needs to be analyzed is the implementation gap (Polman et al., 2022). This gap represents the divide between the well-defined intentions of EU-level policies and their actual execution within individual member states. Considering that the effectiveness in integration policies varies, this prompts an investigation of factors contributing to this disparity in order to evaluate the extent to which member states are able to translate EU-level policy intentions into actionable measures. One significant aspect contributing to this gap is the decentralized nature and structure of the European Union, which grants considerable autonomy to member states in shaping their integration approaches. As a

result, differing interpretations, priorities, and capacities among member states can lead to inconsistencies in policy implementation across national contexts. Moreover, the complex and dynamic nature of migration issues intensifies the challenges of effective policy implementation. Migration involves a wide array of stakeholders, including national and local governments, civil society organizations, migrant communities, and international actors and coordinating efforts while reconciling divergent interests among these stakeholders is undoubtedly complex and can hinder the smooth execution of integration policies. Resource constraints and competing priorities at the national level also play a significant role in contributing to the implementation gap. Limited financial resources, administrative capacity, and political will may also prevent the translation of policy objectives into concrete actions on the ground. Furthermore, shifts in political dynamics, changes in government, and evolving societal attitudes towards migration can introduce additional uncertainties and difficulties into the implementation process. Polman and colleagues (2022) assert that addressing the implementation gap requires a thorough understanding of all these underlying challenges and barriers at stake. It necessitates personalized strategies that take into account the diverse contexts and dynamics within member states. Moreover, encouraging greater coordination and collaboration among stakeholders at the local, national, and European levels is essential for bridging the gap between policy intentions and outcomes on the ground. Ultimately, addressing the implementation gap is crucial for ensuring the effective integration of migrants and the realization of the EU's broader policy objectives in this domain.

In light of these complexities surrounding the implementation of migration policies, it is crucial to examine how ongoing migration discourse and EU citizens' attitudes towards migration intersect with broader political action. Moreover, being aware of the way in which ongoing migration discourse has had a tendency of merging affairs relating to newcomers, first generations, and second generations, it is interesting to see how what emerges as the output of legislative efforts shapes public opinion and influences decisions of EU citizens. It is therefore possible to analyze the attitudes of European citizens regarding migration and the perceived role of the EU in shaping policies in this matter by observing their voting choices. As the 2024 European Parliament elections are approaching, looking in hindsight at what occurred in 2019 is a means to understand the general EU context that was resounding in relatively recent time. A research initiative by

ISMU (Initiatives and Studies on Multiethnicity) *The Twenty-fifth Italian Report on Migrations 2019* (Cesareo, 2020), delved into the nexus between migration and politics, a primary question at the core of this exploration revolved around comprehending whether there was a discernible increase in hostility towards immigration and a growing skepticism concerning the EU. A content analysis revealed varying emphasis across party platforms, with economic issues and EU-related concerns taking center stage. Notably, security and migration emerged as pivotal themes within specific manifestos, reflecting the diverse perspectives within the European political landscape. The research was able to detect the electoral support for right-wing parties reflecting troubled public sentiments on migration and concern for citizens' identification with a European collective identity. Eventually the results of the 2019 elections pointed out shifts in the political landscape, as compared to previous elections, with a reevaluation of traditional political groupings seeing the emergence of parties expressing skepticism about the EU (Pasini and Regalia, 2020).

Having unveiled the multifaceted nature of the various aspects involved in the governance of migrants' integration, this section provided insights into the dynamics shaping the relationship between national and local governments, acknowledging the factors that influence policy formulation and implementation. The very implementation of policies or lack thereof, stirs up public discourse in a way that leads to constantly evaluate the efficacy of formulated policies. It is to be said that a further challenge is placed by the presence of other actors, namely non-governmental entities. Their presence and action will be seen in the ensuing section.

### **2.3. The role of national governments and civil society organizations**

As anticipated in the previous subchapter, the landscape of migrants' integration in the EU is not solely shaped by supranational entities or national governments; as a matter of fact civil society organizations (CSOs) also play a pivotal role in influencing the dynamics of integration. This is legislated by the Treaty of Lisbon (as cited in Scholten and Penninx, 2016; as cited in Adam and Thym 2019) which, while emphasizing the autonomy of member states, underlines the importance of collaboration and support for

their integration actions. Having this in mind, this sets the basis to delve more into the responsibility of national governments and to know about CSOs.

The decentralized structure of the European Union grants significant autonomy to national governments in shaping integration policies within their respective contexts. This flexibility allows member states to tailor strategies according to their unique circumstances, resulting in a diverse array of approaches across the EU. This diversity contributes to the fragmented nature of integration policies which eventually leads to the previously identified implementation gap (Polman et al., 2022). This gap, highlighted as a significant challenge, is closely linked to the roles played by national governments because their actions can cause the effectiveness of integration policies to vary widely. This requires an analysis to understand how different countries have incorporated, adapted, or diverged from EU directives with an examination that involves scrutinizing the mechanisms of policy formulation, resource allocation, and collaboration with local stakeholders. As observed by Aisha Ghaus-Pasha in the *Role of civil society organizations in governance* (2005) national governments serve as crucial actors in addressing the manifold aspects of integration, spanning education, employment, and social inclusion. The interaction between national policies and local contexts becomes evident in the experiences of immigrants, particularly the second generation, who navigate the complexities of belonging within their societies. In addition to national governments, civil society organizations also wield significant influence in shaping the integration landscape. Acting as intermediaries between the state and immigrant communities, these organizations contribute to the development and implementation of integration initiatives. Their involvement adds an essential layer of advocacy, support, and cultural understanding that complements governmental efforts and fosters more inclusive integration processes.

As it has been noted, the landscape of immigrant integration within the EU involves national governments and civil society organizations, both entities playing fundamental roles in shaping integration policies. However they encounter various challenges and opportunities which end up influencing the effectiveness and inclusivity of these efforts. A common significant challenge derives from the coordination of actions across different governance levels. National governments and CSOs must navigate the complexities of ensuring a fair distribution of resources and addressing the diverse needs



of immigrant communities. The potential for tension between government-led initiatives and grassroots efforts adds difficulties in achieving a harmonized approach. However, challenges also give room to opportunities for innovative solutions. This in fact was seen with the successful integration initiatives that demonstrate the potential of collaboration between governmental and civil society efforts. This emphasizes the importance of cooperation and mutual understanding, especially when considering that both parties employ different approaches. A comparative analysis of member states' approaches reveals a spectrum of practices and challenges. In EU policy formulation, both centralized and decentralized models are engaged and this presents noteworthy advantages. Centralized coordination ensures national coherence, while decentralized implementation considers regional specificities. For this reason policy formulation mechanisms vary, with some countries adopting extensive consultation processes involving diverse stakeholders. This participatory approach actually promotes inclusivity and contributes to more inclusive integration frameworks. Nonetheless, challenges persist for national governments, including disparities in resource allocation and policy fragmentation. Unequal resource distribution can create barriers to equitable opportunities for immigrants and therefore there is a demand for standardized approaches. This also derives by the consistency and accessibility challenges posed by policy fragmentation resulting from decentralized integration. Challenges also touch CSOs for example by reason of limited funding and a lack of official recognition and collaboration mechanisms. Insufficient financial support hampers their capacity to engage in policy discussions, highlighting the need to bridge the funding gap and establish formal collaboration frameworks. This comparative insight stresses the importance of shared learning and knowledge exchange. In this regard, platforms for cross-country collaboration enable the dissemination of successful policies, contributing to the ongoing improvement of integration approaches across the EU. This emphasis on cohesive, inclusive, and adaptable policies reflects collective efforts to address the complex challenges of immigrant integration in the EU context.

In light of challenges and opportunities faced by national governments and civil society organizations in integration of immigrants, it is essential to highlight the importance of understanding diverse political and social actors' perceptions. This understanding spans problem definition, underlying assumptions, and proposed remedies.

It compels to extend beyond specific integration policies to comprise generic policies influencing education, healthcare, housing, labor markets for instance. It is in recognizing diverse perspectives that it is possible to craft inclusive and effective policies that address the complex challenges of immigrant integration within the EU. Policymakers must navigate these complexities by considering varied viewpoints to foster a cohesive and inclusive approach aligned with the EU's goals.

An example of a different perspective raised by civil society organizations that has led to a remarkable reaction can be observed in Italy. The response to integration challenges in the country has taken a noteworthy turn due to the efforts of these groups as the following scenario will reveal. In examining the role of civil society organizations particularly concerning second-generation immigrants, Riniolo (2019) claims it has become evident that their significance has not received exhaustive exploration. While existing studies have predominantly focused on identity, belonging, and educational issues, she endeavors to broaden the scope to include this crucial aspect. Such commitment is explained as follows.

Young people's central role in political activism becomes a fundamental factor in interpreting the new narratives and representations that the children of immigrants—in their roles as protagonists—bring forward thanks to their struggles. In line with what was previously highlighted by the literature on the youth's political activism [...], in the political actions of the second generation, it is possible to detect a recurrent element. We are witnessing some processes of reflective re-appropriation of the debates on the young people themselves and the collective sphere, allowing the young people with a migratory background to take distance from the undifferentiated and what is known today as a "stigmatised" group of immigrants, to which sometimes, as previously highlighted, they are erroneously connected to (Riniolo, 2019).

Reaffirming the commitment to amplify the representation of second-generation immigrants, this excerpt from Riniolo (2019) elucidates a shifting paradigm where second-generation immigrants are taking charge to reclaim their narratives. This marks a transformative process where the narrative about them which previously lacked their active involvement or portrayed them inaccurately, is now being reshaped by themselves. This shift is found also in the Italian context with young individuals with migratory backgrounds who emerge as influential figures in the political arena. This is a noteworthy aspect, especially given the increasing presence of young people in Italy with migrant roots, primarily from outside Europe. The greater presence of young people with

migratory descent goes hand in hand with that of individuals who see the perception of belonging challenged by the country they deem as theirs and such perception extends beyond the hurdles in seeking to attain citizenship reform. As a matter of fact, the attention turns to multifaceted engagement in activism that spans grassroots mobilization efforts initiated by activists and top-down strategies employed by institutional and non-institutional entities. Examples of such activism include movements like #ItalianiSenzaCittadinanza (as cited in Riniolo, 2019) and #NonUnadiMeno (as cited in Riniolo, 2019), as well as the CONNGI, the National Coordination of the New Italian Generations (as cited in Riniolo, 2019) and the Afroitalian Power Initiative (as cited in Riniolo, 2019). These initiatives emphasize the central role of young people in reshaping political narratives and representations, engaging in reflective re-appropriation of debates about themselves and their collective sphere, thus challenging stereotypical portrayals of immigrant communities.

Hawthorne (2022) also sheds light on the profound impact of civil society activism on integration policies concerning second-generation immigrants in Italy. The formation of Rete G2 (as cited in Hawthorne, 2022) in 2005 aimed to address shared identity issues and the lack of recognition as Italian citizens among children of immigrants. Established in Rome in 2005 as an online forum gathering second-generation activists, the G2 network engaged in a wide range of cultural, social, and political activities aimed at lobbying for changes in citizenship laws and fostering cultural change in Italy. The network facilitated the formation of a collective and public identity among youth of migrant descent, which had not existed earlier. Beyond advocating for citizenship reform, the organization served as a social network for Italian-born children of immigrants and engaged in national media campaigns challenging perceptions of Italian identity. Key debates within Rete G2 revolved around eligibility criteria, generational tensions, and strategic advocacy approaches. These discussions highlighted differing perspectives within the group regarding suitable citizenship criteria and addressed concerns about potential divisions between second-generation activists and their first-generation immigrant parents. Subsequently, a shift in activist focus towards cultural citizenship, connecting citizenship to the cultural assimilation of second-generation individuals. The “L’Italia Sono Anch’io” (Italy is me too) campaign, launched in 2011, played a critical role in earning support for a new citizenship law, ultimately gaining approval by the

Chamber of Deputies in 2015 (as cited in Hawthorne, 2022). As outlined in the initial chapter, the primary division in accessing formal citizenship in Italy has centered on the principles of *ius soli* and *ius sanguinis*. Recognizing the challenges posed for second-generation immigrants both practically and in terms of issues related to belonging, several efforts have been undertaken to reform the Italian citizenship law. So, the introduction of the concept of “*ius culturae*” in the approved law was a noteworthy shift (Hawthorne, 2022). This because linking citizenship to the cultural assimilation of immigrants, evoked varied responses among activists. The use of flash mobs and protests by the already mentioned splinter group “*Italiani senza Cittadinanza*” symbolized their status as “invisible citizens” (Hawthorne, 2022) and expressed discontent with citizenship delays.

### **Box 2.3: Afroveronesi: nurturing diversity, fostering unity**

Afroveronesi is an association based in Verona which exemplifies a civil society organization that transcends political activism. Bringing together individuals of African descent aged 20 to 35, the group explores themes of hybrid identity, citizenship challenges, and systemic racism. Collaborating with educational entities, Afroveronesi organizes webinars focused on the second generation’s unique experiences, serving as a vital link between Italian and African cultures.

Their primary goals include debunking stereotypes, promoting representation, and aiding individuals in finding their identity and path. Afroveronesi actively encourages education and knowledge through workshops with schools, conferences with universities and local/national associations, and cultural events. By shifting the spotlight away from external narratives, the association empowers its members to redefine Italian identity. Their commitment to representation extends to encouraging a deeper understanding of the diverse cultural fabric in Verona and Italy as a whole, fostering unity through shared stories and cultural exchange.

*Source: (Kanza and Parolin, 2023. “Inclusione, identità, diritti: l’esperienza di ‘Afroveronesi’ come buona pratica di intercultura permanente”. Labsus).*  
<https://www.labsus.org/2023/05/buone-pratiche-di-intercultura-permanente-lesperienza-di-afroveronesi/>

This subchapter presented EU's integration landscape involving national governments and civil society organizations considering that, despite challenges like resource disparities, their collaboration is crucial. It was also understood that taking into account diverse perspectives is key to crafting inclusive policies, illustrated by impactful CSO initiatives in Italy, especially concerning second-generation migrants, challenging stereotypes, and influencing citizenship reform debates. The efforts and impacts of CSOs is further expanded in Box 2.3 with the example of the association Afroveronesi, as well as the resounding presence of individuals like Abril Muvumbi mentioned in Box 2.4. Upon all this, there is the need to understand the way forward by reviewing development, progress, and challenges.

### **3.4. Development, progress and challenges**

Having provided a general framework on EU policies on migrants' integration, which then led to consider the governance of migrants' integration and ultimately understand more about the role of main actors involved, this section is set to review the previous findings with the aim of evaluating the development, understanding the progress, and considering the challenges related to the policies at hand.

As anticipated, the overall framework in place prompts to consider the broader implications of the Multiannual Financial Framework (as cited in Van Wolleghem, 2019) for migration and integration policies. Questions arise about whether the substantial increase in resources translates into enhanced funds for migrant integration. Concerns about the absence of minimum spending thresholds impacting the effective use of funds for integration purposes have led to a proposal by the European Parliament to introduce a 10% minimum threshold for specific integration allocations, signaling an interest in achieving more effective progress (as cited in Adam and Thym, 2019; Van Wolleghem, 2019). This funding-related aspect shows there is a challenge that reflects the need to strike a balance between allocating significant resources for migration and integration while ensuring that these funds are utilized effectively and specifically for their intended purposes. Furthermore, observing the EU's efforts in migration policies reveals a need to advocate for the development of existing rules and policies which involves both supporting the correct application of regulations by member states and preserving EU

funding for integration within the Multiannual Financial Framework (as cited in Van Wolleghem, 2019). The call is for a widespread approach that views immigrant integration as an integral part of wider policies, emphasizing the effective utilization of funds and initiatives.

Beyond fundings, to complement legislative efforts the EU employs soft policy instruments to foster a multifaceted integration strategy. Guidelines, recommendations, and initiatives contribute to shaping social cohesion. The commitment to soft policy instruments underscores an approach that intends to go beyond legal frameworks, recognizing the role of cultural and social factors in the integration process. With this realization, there are several considerations and proposals that emerge within the EU with the aim to enhance integration and address associated challenges in European migration policy. The EU emphasizes the need for the European Commission to continue supporting and overseeing member states in implementing existing rules. There is also a recommendation to direct the European Social Fund Plus toward projects that genuinely benefit immigrants, integrating them effectively into mainstream policies. A European Court of Justice case (as cited in Adam and Thym, 2019) highlights the importance of naturalizing deeper integration, suggesting that despite challenges in EU harmonization, considering naturalization as integral to immigration laws may be worthwhile. Reintegrating naturalization into policy papers and exploring an informal coordination framework for nationality laws is also suggested.

A notable progression in the integration discourse is the emergence of new institutional structures fostering multilevel governance. Bilateral and EU-level dialogues between emigration and immigration countries have become instrumental in shaping innovative policy initiatives. The inclusion of diverse actors and interests in multilevel governance exemplifies the EU's commitment to a more collaborative and comprehensive integration strategy. This overarches the interconnectedness of migration and development which has been pivotal in shaping EU policies. This perspective recognizes the role of countries of origin as essential actors in immigrants' integration. The integration narrative extends beyond national borders, aligning with the broader Migration and Development framework (as cited in King and Collyer, 2016; as cited in Adam and Thym, 2019). Upon this, it is suggested that a paradigm shift requires a holistic understanding of integration processes within the context of both destination and origin

countries which can contribute to minimize the persistent challenge of the implementation gap. Such gap can be attributable to divergent approaches and varying degrees of success in translating EU-level policy intentions into actionable measures. This contributes to disparities in integration outcomes with generational tensions within immigrant families, highlighting complexities in navigating cultural identity and societal expectations. Therefore, to cater such situation, the recognition of countries of origin as essential actors in the integration process represents a departure from traditional paradigms. In turn, this means that the shift towards a more inclusive perspective on integration aligns with the recognition that successful integration goes beyond interactions with the majority group. It involves creating opportunities for immigrants, addressing economic and educational disparities, and fostering a sense of belonging that extends beyond bureaucratic citizenship.

Matters of belonging link back to the issue of integration policies not being tailored to the specific needs of second generations, prompting a shift from the current integration paradigm to an equality paradigm. Manchenko and Westerveen (2019) affirm that the limited attention to generational differences within the group of people of migrant descent poses challenges, making a focus on equality crucial, especially in education and employment policies. It is agreed that addressing the specific challenges faced by the second generation through policies attentive to their differences can avoid homogenizing the experiences of newcomers, first generations, and second generations. This can relate with the initial analysis of the EU Commission *An EU Strategy for Youth – Investing and Empowering: A renewed open method of coordination to address youth challenges and opportunities* (2009) which underscored the importance of cooperative approaches. Understanding success stories and challenges faced by the second generation may lead to the EU adopting a cooperative stance in addressing shared challenges related to integration. The communication's emphasis on mutual solidarity also aligns with the idea of fostering cohesion within diverse communities which leads to consider that achieving long-term integration involves sustained efforts in policy development, implementation, and societal attitudes. In fact, the evolving demographic landscape of European cities, marked by increasing diversity, challenges traditional notions of homogenous ethnicity. It is understood that the changing demographic landscape of European cities introduces complexity to the integration narrative. Given that questions arise about the yardstick for

measuring integration as ethnic and cultural diversity there is that shift calls for a reevaluation of integration criteria to capture the multifaceted nature of contemporary European societies. Effort is intended to have long-lasting impact, therefore for policies to adapt to the reality of multi-ethnic urban environments and to ensure long-term integration, second generation may play a key role in bridging cultural boundaries.

These various perspectives lead to infer that there is the need for a rounded approach to development that involves the understanding of the multifaceted processes of integration. The EU's emphasis on equality, non-discrimination, and acknowledging the diversity among people of migrant descent signals a commitment to widespread development. However, development would call for ongoing adaptation, recognizing the evolving nature of integration in a diverse and interconnected world. Overall, while the EU has made strides in shaping integration policies, a further examination is necessary to considering country-specific contexts like the case of Italy.

To consider the progress and development of integration policies in Italy, it seems pertinent to analyze a focal point of integration efforts for the country which is the one revolving around attempts to reform citizenship laws. It should be pointed out that Italy's policy changes, while undoubtedly influenced by EU-level discussions, also reflect unique challenges and opportunities specific to the nation's demographic and political landscape that considers complex patterns of migration and cultural diversity. A closer look on the real-world impact of legislative changes causes a specific redirection of focus in understanding whether the policies actualized in Italy have brought about tangible improvements in access to citizenship and integration outcomes for the second generation. This slant is of particular relevance because investigating the impact policy changes on second-generation immigrants give a clearer perspective on the development of integration policies.

Italy has witnessed several attempts to reform citizenship laws, with discussions spurred by civil society organizations, political figures, and academic proposals. As previously mentioned, the 2012 "L'Italia sono anch'io" campaign (as cited in Hawthorne, 2022) is an example of the engagement and support of civil society organizations aiming at raising the awareness on the need for citizenship law. The promotion of awareness bred results with Rete G2, the second generations network whose efforts reveal how the need for reform can be demanded through citizens' initiative. In this case, Rete G2 embodies



the perspectives of second-generation immigrants who can offer invaluable insights by addressing the challenges they experience and suggesting further improvements. This, in fact, extends beyond the confines of policy documents, providing a qualitative understanding of the on-the-ground realities faced by those who are directly affected. It must be understood that second-generation immigrants can encounter bureaucratic hurdles, societal prejudices, and other barriers despite legislative reforms. So, identifying and dealing with these challenges is integral to shaping effective and inclusive integration policies. This applies also because there is richness in the varying ethnic backgrounds, socioeconomic statuses, and regional contexts and these may call for distinct experiences and needs. Therefore recognizing this diversity is a means to ensure that policies cater to the unique challenges faced by different segments of the second-generation population. This approach can lead to receiving suggestions for improvements that would serve as a roadmap for refining policies and in the case of Italy, advocating for efficient citizenship processes, addressing socio-economic disparities, and enhancing educational opportunities inform a more targeted and responsive approach to integration and cohesion.

The exploration of development, challenges, and progress in immigrant integration policies within the EU and Italy sheds light on the dynamic and evolving nature of the integration landscape. The trajectory from legislative frameworks to soft policy instruments and multilevel governance in the EU reflects a commitment to adaptability and collaboration. While challenges like the implementation gap and shifting urban demographics persist, ongoing efforts have been instrumental in striking a balance between autonomy and collaboration. The steadfast commitment to a comprehensive integration strategy, underscored by the recognition of Migration and Development, underlines the interconnectedness of migration and development in shaping the integration narrative. The overview highlights that a continuous learning process is needed for a progressive and positive impact. Indeed, the need for adaptability and responsiveness to evolving circumstances for a harmonious and inclusive future.

Going beyond the EU, the examination has extended to the national context of Italy and particularly concerning citizenship reforms. It emerges that the impact of policy changes on second-generation immigrants provides a critical historical lens to assess the effectiveness of integration efforts. By capturing diverse perspectives, addressing

#### **Box 2.4: Abril Muvumbi: aiming at development through advocacy**

Abril Muvumbi, hailing from Imola, is an Afro-Italian actively engaged in politics and volunteering from a young age. She embodies the individual who makes a difference within civil service organizations while aspiring to become engaged within the national government. In 2021, she participated in the European Youth Event in Strasbourg and later on worked on the Champs project by AMREF, funded by the European Union. She is also a member of AFAR (Afrodescendant Fighting Against Racism) and was selected by the German Marshall Fund for the Transatlantic Inclusion Leaders Network program in 2020. Serving as the coordinator for the Face to Face association in Bologna, she presented a booklet of desires to the Chamber of Deputies on August 3, 2022, through the Italia Viva political party. As of 2022, Muvumbi was pursuing a degree in International Cooperation on Human Rights and Intercultural Heritage at the University of Bologna.

In an interview with Daniele Martino (2022), she reflected on her political aspirations, expressing surprise at the significant presence of Afro-descendants in the European Parliament in Strasbourg compared to Italy's political landscape. Muvumbi advocates for a more noble and civil approach to politics, citing the active involvement of youth in other countries like Germany. She emphasizes the need to change the narrative about Africa in Europe and believes that those in the community are best suited to drive this change. Critically evaluating Italian politics, she highlights its shortcomings in addressing racism and citizenship laws, criticizing the lack of courage in confronting issues such as immigration and European Union policies.

*Source: (Martino, 2020. "Voci di nuovi italiani (2)". Doppio Zero). <https://www.doppiozero.com/voci-di-nuovi-italiani-2>*

challenges, and incorporating suggestions for improvements, it is possible to have a better general understanding of the evolution of integration policies in the EU and its member states. The attempt of bringing about positive change is highlighted once again by the activism that Abril Muvumbi pushes forward. In Box 2.4 this is observed with the intention of underlining how understanding the fallacies in political landscape vis à vis the needs of second-generation immigrants can be a starting point to considering how to

attain the aspired development. The comparison of the EU and Italian perspectives shed light on the pivotal importance of tailored approaches in the development of integration policies. This balance between collaboration and autonomy is identified as a crucial element in crafting policies that are both inclusive and effective. The significance of this comparison also lies in its contribution to the overarching exploration of this chapter which delved into the functioning of EU policies, the governance of migrants' integration, and the various actors involved.

The primary objective of this section was to gain insights into if and how policies address the specific needs of young people of African descent in Europe. Then it aimed to understand the dynamics wherein these individuals perceive a lack of recognition from society at large. Despite this perception, the young individuals aspire to be integral and contributing members of the community, driven by a sense of belonging. Yet, along this journey, second-generation immigrants encounter both practical challenges and opportunities that significantly impact their place in society and their journey toward upward mobility. These factors play a crucial role in shaping their experiences and opportunities for advancement within the societal framework. Upon this chapter's groundwork it will be possible to zoom in from the general EU policies to the daily macro-societal dynamics that influence the lives of second generations. The use the lenses of education and employment to understand more about the presence of second-generation immigrants, and specifically young people of African descent, in Europe.

## **Chapter 3: Young people of African descent across Europe**

### **3.1. General overview on the presence of young people of African descent across Europe**

The groundwork laid in the introductory chapter considered the context surrounding the realities faced by young people of African descent. It navigated through the dynamics of assimilation, integration, and the associated challenges, with a particular emphasis on identity nuances. Ascertained that second-generation immigrants do not need to integrate into the societies they were born or raised, instead, the understanding of integration is framed in relation to their unique path to belonging in society. Such path is then significantly shaped by policies, as will be observed in chapter 3, that indirectly aim at directing their integration while addressing socio-economic disparities. With this in perspective, this chapter will provide a framework to further explore the situation of young people of African descent across Europe as it has been understood that it is important to comprehend the lived experiences of this population from a broader societal standpoint with an unbiased perspective. The aim is to provide an overview of the presence of second-generation immigrants in Europe, with a specific focus on young people of African descent, the primary subjects of interest in this study. While data presented reflects the global situation of second-generation immigrants in Europe, insights are incorporated to address the unique experiences of young people of African descent.

It should be premised that as detected by Capesciotti and Sansonetti (2021) statistically incorporating first-generation immigrants into data sets seems feasible since this group can be readily identified based on birthplace or nationality. However, collecting data on second-generation immigrants causes challenges due to the need of determining the nationality of the host country and the inherent condition that these individuals may have been born in the host country itself. The discussion on classification challenges, echoing Andall's (2002) observation in chapter one, calls attention to the

significance of varying terminologies in influencing the methodological approaches applied in surveys. Recognizing this implies that the choice of terminology not only influences the experiences of second-generation immigrants in their quest for belonging but also poses complications for scholarly research, particularly in the collection of official data. To compensate for the absence of official data, specific surveys are used to investigate the integration of second-generation immigrants in EU countries. Academic research provides alternative data sources through databases such as the OECD PISA, evaluating the proficiency of 15-year-olds in real-life applications of reading, mathematics, and science skills. Additionally, surveys like the Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Survey in Four European Countries (CILS4EU) focus on examining the integration trajectories of immigrant children across England, Germany, the Netherlands, and Sweden. The surveys cover language proficiency, cultural engagement, educational achievements, labor market involvement, social interactions, and factors such as a sense of belonging, attitudes, and cultural norms with the aim of offering a view of the varied experiences within this growing population (Capesciotti and Sansonetti, 2021).

In 2014, the demographic landscape of Europe counted a significant presence of second-generation immigrants, constituting a substantial 34.3% of the overall population. Within this group, 24.8% traced their origins to EU countries, while 9.5% hailed from non-EU backgrounds (Chimienti et al., 2019). These figures accentuate the relevance of second-generation immigrants as a demographic force, highlighting their impact on the European social fabric. Born or raised in EU countries, they become agents of change within the very societies that shape their identity. This demographic significance was further enlightened in 2018 when disaggregated data on second-generation individuals living in EU member states, categorized by their countries of origin, was released. This information primarily focused on youth and lacked gender-specific breakdowns, yet it shed light on the scale of the phenomenon. According to the report, approximately 27% of second-generation births from parents of immigrant backgrounds in the EU were of African origin. Among those foreign-born individuals who arrived in an EU country before the age of 15, roughly 30% were from Africa (Capesciotti and Sansonetti, 2021).

Knowing the ethnic background proves beneficial to understand the socio-economic context. Indeed, children from non-EU immigrant families are notably more likely to belong to low-income households across various countries. For instance, in Italy

and Belgium, although these children represent a smaller percentage of the total child population, they account for a disproportionately higher number in low-income households. Conversely, children from EU immigrant families are overrepresented in low-income households in most countries, with Italy displaying relatively higher figures (Dustman and Frattini, 2011b).

**Box 3.1: *Eccellenze Afrodiscendenti* and *Fratelli e Sorelle*: glimpses into success stories**

*Eccellenze Afrodiscendenti* (Afro-descendant excellences) is a radio column on *Radio Radicale* that has an exemplary initiative aiming to bring exposure to the stories of prominent young people of African descent in Italy. Launched in 2021 with the first interview featuring former minister and Member of the European Parliament Cécile Kyenge, the column strives to portray diverse stories for a more widespread representation. From writers and journalists to actors and directors, from professionals in sports or fashion to musicians or chef, among the various interviewees, both well-known and not, Susanna Owusu Twumwah is one of the interviewees.

As a communication manager of Ghanaian origin, like many others, she advances a campaign-like narrative for representation through her blog *Into Akosua's World*. The blog is not only used to narrate her own story but also to highlight various African and Afro-descendant realities in Italy through sections like *Fratelli e Sorelle* (Brothers and Sisters). This is a column which aims to provide a platform for the stories of black individuals in Italy, stories intended to be role models for future generations, as indicated by the blog's subtitle, "Empower Yourself to Empower Others". Twumwah states that it is time to share commendable experiences in Italy so that her generation's children will not have to look beyond borders but will rather be able to look around the corner to believe in themselves (Twumwah as cited in Billau, 2023).

Source: (Billau, 2023. "*Eccellenze Afrodiscendenti - Intervista a Susanna Owusu Twumwah, communication manager di origini ghanesi*". *Eccellenze Afrodiscendenti*). <https://www.radioradicale.it/scheda/694391/eccellenze-afrodiscendenti-intervista-a-susanna-owusu-twumwah-comunicazione-manager-di>

This brief exploration on the numerical presence of second-generation immigrants in Europe forms the foundation for an analysis of key themes related to social integration within a demographic that not only signifies societal change but also has the potential to become a driving force. Therefore, knowing more about the presence of second-generation immigrants in Europe and understanding the potential impact they can have calls for further examination of factors that influence their social presence and contribution. In this thesis, the crucial interplay between education and employment are the chosen factors that will serve as lenses for a closer view of the social integration of the group object of this study. Education emerges as a pivotal factor influencing the path in the employment landscape and in the process, there are different opportunities and challenges that are encountered, as will be viewed in the following section.

### **3.2 Education: a first lens on the integration of young people of African descent in Europe**

This subchapter will delve into the fundamental role that education plays in the lives of second-generation immigrants and the way in which it directs their integration journey in Europe. Childhood education, family influence, and aspirations will be explored and zooming into the Italian context, the educational journey of young people of African descent will be uncovered.

Education, framed as an “empowerment right” (IOM, 2021) holds the key to enabling individuals to become active contributors to society, fostering mutual understanding and respect. Its influence extends beyond individual empowerment, shaping professional trajectories with significant implications for the labor market and, consequently, societal dynamics. Early experiences in education, starting from childhood, play a major role in paving the way for subsequent years. As noted by Dustmann and colleagues (2011), scholars from diverse fields, including anthropologists, sociologists, and economists, contribute with unique perspectives to the study of the educational attainment of children of immigrants. Economists focus specifically on unfolding the means through which the educational achievements of second-generation immigrants intersect with the labor market and social integration. Hence the necessity of analyzing the educational level of second-generation immigrants and comparing their academic

achievement to that of their European native-by-origin peers. In this context, the key role played by parents in determining the educational outcomes of second-generation immigrants cannot be overstated. The educational attainment of parents significantly influences the trajectory of their children which reveals the intricate relationship between parental education and the educational outcomes of their offspring (Dustmann et al., 2011; OECD, 2023).

From the early stages, childhood education and care emerge as essential components which contribute not only to academic development but also to establishing meaningful ties with their country of acquisition. As mentioned in the OECD publication *Indicators of Immigrant Integration 2023: Settling In* (2023) Europe counts a substantial 88% of children of immigrants who attend preschool, emphasizing the pivotal role of cultural, societal, and linguistic ties in shaping their future success in schools and the labor market. On the other hand, where these educational services are absent or remain unutilized, this results in complex situations evident in lower reading skills among 15-year-olds who did not attend preschool as attested of in the above-mentioned OECD PISA. Reading proficiency being a critical skill, significantly influences life chances, with a “less privileged socio-economic background” (OECD, 2023) often acting as a barrier for second-generation immigrants to attain optimal literacy levels. The fundamental role of education in influencing social cohesion within European societies is evident. Unequal educational outcomes pose a potential threat, creating a gap between second-generation immigrants and their European native-by-origin peers. Across the EU, 29% of second-generation immigrants born in the EU lack basic reading skills at the age of 15, in contrast to 18% for their native counterparts. However, it should be noted that this gap diminishes in countries such as Italy, France, Spain, and the United Kingdom (OECD, 2023). Considering that education, before being an empowerment right is fundamentally a human right that should be upheld irrespective of socio-economic circumstances and geographical location, there arises a need to foster the educational presence of young people of African descent and second-generation immigrants as a whole. As mentioned in the 2021 IOM briefing on education in the EU, international law recognizes the broader value of education beyond its functional role in labor market access. Its significance lies in providing students with global enrichment, aiding them not only in navigating the



professional landscape but also in understanding and assimilating into the societies in which they are raised (IOM, 2021).

An interesting trend emerges with second-generation immigrants having an increased motivation to attain higher education as they grow older. Tertiary level education data reveal a higher percentage of second-generation immigrants with higher tertiary educational attainment than the first-generation. Indeed, across the EU, 54% of second-generation immigrants born in the EU with at least one foreign-born parent, exceed their parents' levels of educational attainment. In 2014, second-generation immigrants aged 25-54 had attained higher tertiary level education than first-generation immigrants. According to statistics, second-generation immigrants with an EU background amounted to 38.5%, those without an EU background were 36.2%, whereas first-generation immigrants were 29.4% (Eurostat, 2016; OECD, 2023). This dynamic speaks of the enduring impact of the work of first-generation immigrants, which paves the way for educational advancements in following generations. However, it is crucial to note that this “intergenerational betterment” (OECD, 2023) is not solely a product of a natural progression but is also driven by a desire to counter the overrepresentation of immigrants placed in the lower educational strata. Moreover, a noteworthy observation is the shares of second-generation immigrants surpassing those of European native-by-origin individuals in higher tertiary educational attainment rates, accounting for 30.9%. This challenges the perceptions that children of immigrants face limitations in pursuing education beyond certain levels, either due to economic constraints or presumed predispositions towards learning (Eurostat, 2016).

A nuanced gender perspective reveals that women, especially second-generation immigrants born in the EU, demonstrate significant progress in the intergenerational outlook. These female individuals outperform their European native-by-origin peers when it comes to intergenerational progress (OECD, 2023). Capesciotti and Sansonetti (2021) mention a 2014 analysis by Fenella Fleischmann and Cornelia Kristen that was conducted to assess the educational achievements of second-generation immigrants, considering both gender and ethnic groups in various countries, including EU member states such as Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, the Netherlands, and Sweden. From this analysis emerged relevant data for this section concerning women of African descent. Examining academic achievement, women consistently exhibited higher levels of

accomplishment than their male counterparts across all studied countries, except for the Netherlands where the gender difference was deemed insignificant. Notably, African women in Finland demonstrated a significantly smaller advantage in grades compared to women in the ethnic majority population, while in Sweden, North Africans experienced a larger advantage. In the realm of upper secondary education, where there is a division between the academic and vocational tracks, a consistent female advantage was observed in the choice of the academic track across all countries. Particularly in France, women of African origin, especially North Africans, showcased a significant advantage over their male counterparts in pursuing full-time education. Upon completion of upper secondary education, both France and Sweden displayed a female advantage across all ethnic groups, surpassing that found in the majority population. In Belgium and the Netherlands, the advantage was comparable to that in the majority population, with the Netherlands showing a smaller gap than other countries. Lastly, turning to tertiary education completion, Belgium demonstrated female advantages coupled with ethnic penalties across all second-generation groups. In contrast, the Netherlands showed a female disadvantage (Fleischmann and Kristen, as cited in Capesciotti and Sansonetti, 2021). In essence, examining how second-generation immigrants navigate education allows to view the intricate connection between education, social cohesion, and generational progress. The specific focus on women of African descent provides insights into gender dynamics, showcasing the academic progress of these women compared to their male counterparts across various EU countries. These findings are of particular interest as they lead to consider that in highlighting both achievements and challenges of second-generation immigrants it is also needed to understand gender-specific experiences.

The focus now narrows onto the intricate Italian scenario drawing from sources by different scholars to explore the assimilation journey of young people of African descent within the country's educational sphere, as well as to further reveal the challenges and opportunities that shape their experiences. Having previously explored statistics to consider the presence of second-generation immigrants in the EU, it is necessary to provide a brief overview of the numbers concerning these individuals in Italy as well before looking into the education landscape. A broad understanding of these figures is necessary due to the fact that they reflect, once again, the impact that this demographic can have on society. In Italy, second-generation immigrants are not only increasing but

also exhibit characteristics that are progressively complex and articulated. Statistical data reveals that their presence is actually a “growing phenomenon” as defined by Andall (2002). Such presence is particularly noticeable in the rising number of children with immigrant background in the Italian school system, which has prompted social scientists to investigate their integration experiences (Minello, Barban, 2012). As of 1<sup>st</sup> January 2018, second-generation minors in Italy numbered 1,316,000, with 75%, corresponding to 991,000 individuals, born in Italy. Second-generation minors constituted 13% of the minor population and notably those born in Italy were mainly from communities with a more extended history of immigration, reflecting family reunifications or the formation of families over time (Conti et al., 2020). This demographic diversity implies that some minority groups in Italy have a relatively recent presence, while others are already at the second-generation stage.

Transitioning to the Italian education system, a concise exploration of its functioning is beneficial to better comprehend what will be discussed. To aid such discussion the overview provided by professors Minello and Barban (2012) in their article *The Educational Expectations of Children of Immigrants in Italy* is quoted as follows.

Public education is free, and students are guaranteed access to higher levels provided that they complete lower levels. The four main components are (1) preschool (three years, not compulsory); (2) first level, which includes *scuola primaria*, or primary school (five years) and *scuola secondaria di primo grado*, or middle school (three years); (3) second level, which includes high school or other secondary schooling (five years); and (4) university (three years for a bachelor’s).

After preschool, the first level (primary school and middle school) culminates in a state exam. Students who pass this examination are entitled to move on to the second level, which consists of three different tracks: high schools and art schools (*licei*), polytechnic institutes (*istituti tecnici*), and vocational schools (*istituti professionali*). School attendance in Italy is compulsory until age 16. Because the first level is expected to end at about age 14, the choice of secondary school represents a turning point in a student’s life. (Minello and Barban, 2012).

Also highlighting the legal aspect, Article 34 of the Italian Constitution emphasizes that “schools are open to all” (as cited in IOM, 2021) recognizing the fundamental right to education. Article 38 of the Consolidated Act on Immigration further ensures education for all TCNs in Italy, including training, access to services and participation in school life as well as underlining the value of intercultural education,

language differences, and mutual respect (as cited in IOM, 2021). With this foundation, it is possible to view the numbers concerning second-generation immigrants in Italian schools. Data reveals that at the end of 2018, 9.7% of students in Italy had a migratory background, representing around 850,000 individuals according to the National Register of Students and Graduates, the ANSUL. Among these students, 63% of them were born in Italy (as cited in IOM, 2021). It is important to highlight the background as it contributes to comprehending the reason for which navigating the Italian school system poses challenges. A first challenge is found in bureaucratic hurdles and long procedures, particularly for the recognition of qualifications obtained outside the EU. Additional obstacles can be the absence of support from family and friends, diminished social capital, both at a personal and family level, creating a gap between children of immigrants and Italian-by-origin students. This discrepancy is not solely related to parental qualifications but extends to symbolic cultural capital.

Briefly emphasizing on the economic and linguistic barriers. It is to be noted that economic barriers are significant, especially when higher education is concerned. There are expenses associated with the costs of university, namely tuition fees, accommodation, and transportation, along with indirect costs like the inability of students to work during their studies. Such expenses are frequently beyond the means of vulnerable immigrant families. On top of this, linguistic barriers pose difficulties in navigating the complex administrative procedures for school enrolment and meeting academic requirements, leading to early dropouts. The European indicator of Early Leaving from Education and Training (ELET) highlights that foreign students face a higher risk of dropout, with a rate of 32.8%, in contrast to the national average of 13.8%, exceeding the 2020 European target of 10%. The 2019 MIUR Report (as cited in IOM, 2021) on foreign students in Italy reveals that over 40% of fourteen-year-old students with non-Italian citizenship lag behind in education. In Italy, particularly for students not born in the country, the school path presents considerable trials. Only 49% of students born abroad are placed in the class corresponding to their age. Nearly 40% find themselves in the previous class and 12.2% even in classes where the entry age is at least two years lower than their actual age. Notably, a significant contrast exists between second-generation immigrants born in Italy, with percentages very similar to their Italian-by-origin counterparts. The Report also reveals that male foreign students experienced more frequent repetitions than their female

peers. However, for second-generation immigrant girls born in Italy, the difference compared to the percentage of Italian-by-origin girls repeating school years is minimal with less than 2 percentage points (Conti et al., 2020; IOM, 2021). The reasons behind these observations can be linked to findings from OECD studies (2016) that emphasize the influence of socioeconomic disparities on academic achievements. A range of factors need to be considered, as academic success seems associated with certain family aspects like income and the family's investment in academic outcomes. However, when examining students in upper secondary schools, family characteristics seem to play a comparatively lesser role (Conti et al., 2020).

Dealing with academic transitions, attention turns to the decisions made in shaping one's educational journey. While the majority of lower secondary school students are inclined to pursue further studies, a notable percentage, particularly among foreign students, express uncertainty about their future paths. 10.7% of the respondents of the 2020 ISTAT report (Conti et al., 2020) pronounce uncertainty whereas the percentage drops to 5.3% among their Italian-by-origin counterparts. The first group claims to be unsure about plans after obtaining a lower secondary school diploma. Foreign students intending to continue their studies, less frequently choose the lyceum compared to their Italian-by-origin peers, with rates of 44.3% and 57%, respectively. Noteworthy variations emerge among foreign students based on their migration background. Almost 50% of second-generation immigrants born in Italy express an aspiration to attend a lyceum, while 35.5% are inclined towards vocational schools. Data also indicates that, as the age of arrival in Italy increases, the percentage of those aspiring to attend a lyceum decreases. For instance, 45% of those who arrived in Italy at the age of 11 express an intention to pursue vocational education, whereas only about 35% wish to continue their studies by attending a lyceum (Conti et al., 2020). These statistics underscore the need to highlight the significance of distinguishing between the concepts of expectations and aspirations in the sphere of education. Educational aspirations, as defined, envisage general goals or ambitions for the future and correspond to the level of education that individuals would ideally like to achieve. On the other hand, expectations stand for concrete plans for the future, corresponding to the educational and occupational levels that children realistically expect to attain. For clarity, as delineated by economist Jacob and quoted by Minello and Barban (2012), expectations are what individuals anticipate will happen, whereas

aspirations represent their hopeful vision of the future. It is crucial to recognize that educational expectations and aspirations not only serve as strong predictors of educational attainment but also mirror self-perceptions and influence attitudes toward school. Unfulfilled aspirations can lead to frustration. This points out the strong relationship between aspirations and achievement. Therefore, fostering educational ambition is deemed a necessary condition for achieving high levels of educational attainment.

Firstly, to improve the educational and, consequently, occupational prospects of second-generation immigrants, it may be crucial to elevate their aspirations and foster a mindset that aligns with that of their Italian-by-origin peers. In pursuit of creating an atmosphere that enlightens second-generation immigrants in Italy about their potential academic progress, individuals like Kany Fall take a proactive role in closing the disparity between achievable aspirations and the educational accomplishments of new second-generations. This narrative is detailed in Box 3.2. In addition to creating this awareness, understanding the school context is vital for investigating educational attitudes. Schools play a pivotal role in the social integration of children and adolescents, serving as both a place of learning and interaction with peers and adults. As noted by Minello and Barban (2012), schools have traditionally been regarded as the second sphere of socialization after the family. Therefore, this setting holds particular importance in shaping the cohesion of second-generation immigrants and facilitating their integration and advancement within it. This progressive advancement is evident, as despite the mentioned challenges, there is a noticeable rise in the number of students with a migratory background in Italian universities. This connects to narratives of academic success that extend to career trajectories and social involvement of second generations, as highlighted in Box 3.1, referencing interviews with Afro-descendant successes in the radio segment “Eccellenze Afrodiscendenti”. Additionally, the previously mentioned Box 1.3 featuring the narrative of Anna Osei serves as another illustration.

Exploring the realm of education as the primary perspective for comprehending the integration process of young people of African descent in Europe, particularly Italy, has unveiled the complexities that shape their educational journey. This involves a complex interplay of socioeconomic elements, educational ambitions, and systemic

obstacles. Recognizing the nexus between education and employment, the subsequent section will pivot to this second lens of analysis.

**Box 3.2: Kany Fall: cultivating careers through university guidance coaching**

Noteworthy when dealing with representation and education is Kany Fall, an individual who has achieved significant educational milestones and delved into the professional world, while actively encouraging her peers to pursue their goals. Kany Fall, a finance professional, provides coaching on university and career paths for Afro-Italian individuals. In an interview with Bellamy Ogak, Fall discussed her career, her university guidance service, and experiences studying and working abroad. She mentions that the target audience of her coaching sessions comprises individuals with a life experience similar to hers, specifically those who grew up as children of immigrants in Italy. As of 2020, she had engaged in conversations with approximately a hundred people, 80% of whom were women, spanning ages 17 to 35 and encompassing diverse backgrounds. A common thread among the people she coached was their university education, ranging from those in the process of deciding their path to those on the verge of completing their studies, contemplating how to integrate into the job market.

*Source: (Ogak, 2020. "Professionista in finanza offre coaching su università e lavoro agli italiani afrodiscendenti ed è subito boom di richieste". Afroitalian Souls). <https://www.afroitaliansouls.it/esperta-di-finanza-offre-coaching-su-universita-e-lavoro-agli-italiani-afrodiscendenti-ed-e-subito-boom-di-richieste/>.*

**3.3 Employment: a second lens on the integration of young people of African descent in Europe**

Having ascertained the pivotal role that education plays, the exploration will venture into the closely knitted sphere of employment as a second lens to consider the assimilation process of young people of African descent in Europe and in Italy. It is to be noted that the persisting educational inequality is expected to reflect in labor market dynamics. The investigation of these dynamics is set to consider disparities in

occupational distribution, shedding light on challenges derived from gender, generation, and ethnic backgrounds.

Once again, it becomes apparent that the second-generation immigrants generally experience better outcomes in the labor market compared to the first as affirmed also by Fleischmann and her colleagues (2007). Simultaneously considering both gender and generational perspectives, the study carried out by Capesciotti and Sansonetti (2021) reveals that first-generation immigrant men are notably prevalent in the construction sector, whereas their counterparts from the second generation are disproportionately engaged in various service industries. Among female workers with a foreign background, a significant presence is observed in commerce and hospitality sectors. Second-generation female workers exhibit a slightly higher likelihood of working in the transport and education sectors. First-generation female immigrants show an overrepresentation in the private sector, with 74% being employed in this sector, compared to 66% of female second-generation migrants and 65% of native women. Additionally, first-generation female immigrants are less inclined to work in the public sector, with only 18% compared to 27% among the second generation and 27% among native women. Through the examination of job quality, it becomes evident that first-generation immigrant workers are disproportionately involved in active manual and poor-quality work. Conversely, second-generation immigrant workers are overrepresented in high-skilled and high-pressure jobs, while being underrepresented in poor-quality and routine jobs. Despite the continued challenges faced by the second generation in labor market integration, the jobs they access tend to exhibit better quality compared to those available to the first generation. Interestingly, focusing on the second generation, male immigrants are often overrepresented in higher-status occupations such as managerial, professional, and technical jobs, as well as in service and sales roles. Similarly, second-generation female workers show a slight overrepresentation among managers and service and sales workers. It should also be noted that the employment rates for second-generation immigrant women, even those with tertiary qualifications, lag behind their male counterparts. A 2019 Eurofound study (as cited in Capesciotti and Sansonetti, 2021) highlighted particularly low employment rates among female second-generation immigrants in specific countries, including Croatia, Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Portugal, and Spain.



Further analysis unveils variations in the labor market participation of second-generation immigrants based on their origin, with certain ethnic groups, like North Africans in Belgium, France, and the Netherlands, facing higher disadvantages. As a matter of fact, the mentioned 2019 Eurofound study (as cited in Capesciotti and Sansonetti, 2021) highlighted the significant impact of a worker's birthplace or that of their parents on their working life. The findings revealed that, excluding those of EU origins, second-generation immigrants generally face inferior employment outcomes compared to the natives across most member states. Moreover, the employment rate for second-generation immigrants born in the EU with at least one parent born in the EU surpasses that of those with both parents born outside of the EU. Previous findings showed that for individuals aged 25-54 in the EU, the employment rate was 81.1% for second-generation immigrants born in the EU with at least one parent born in the EU compared to 74% for those with both parents born outside the EU. Interestingly, the first group's employment rate slightly exceeded that of their European native-by-origin peers, whose employment rate was of 78.6% as of 2014 (Eurostat, 2016; Guild et al., 2017). However, this slight advantage in employment rate does not counterbalance the disadvantage that second-generation immigrants face in comparison to natives.

Examining the multifaceted factors influencing the labor market integration of the second-generation immigrants, various aspects are taken into account including social background, language proficiency, aspirations, family mobilization, experiences of discrimination and racism, and access to citizenship. Scholars such as Fleischmann and Dronkers (2007) argue that second-generation immigrants encounter barriers in accessing the highest occupational classes introducing the concept of a ceiling effect. This phenomenon hinders social mobility for second-generation immigrants, preventing them from accessing the most sought-after positions in the labor markets of European countries. In particular, the ceiling effect disproportionately affects highly educated second-generation immigrant females, leading to lower returns impeding their chances of entering the upper middle-class (Fleischmann et al., 2007; Capesciotti and Sansonetti, 2021).

Another essential aspect to consider is the issue of lower returns, crucial to the understanding of the increasing gap between native-by-origin Europeans and second-generation immigrants, particularly among the highly educated within the latter group.

This group faces challenges in securing occupations that align with their skills, often settling for lower-status jobs. In contrast, their native peers with whom they studied, land in a more straightforward manner into high-status jobs matching their qualifications. This discrepancy emphasizes the complexities of social mobility and employment dynamics for second-generation immigrants which leads to consider the pressing issue of overqualification in a scenario where young individuals born to foreign parents encounter specific challenges in securing employment corresponding to their skill level. Such circumstance arises from a combination of factors, including discrimination, limited networks, and insufficient knowledge of the labor market. Statistics (OECD, 2023) reveal that almost a quarter of highly educated individuals born to foreign parents aged 25 to 34 find themselves formally overqualified for their current positions in the EU. Navigating towards a job that aligns with one's educational attainment proves to be more attainable for those who are socio-economically advantaged and possess extensive social networks. Intriguingly, within this group, the children born in the EU from foreign-born individuals are underrepresented, especially when immigrant parents originate from non-EU countries (Fleischmann et al., 2007; OECD, 2023). This complex network of challenges in employment faced by second-generation immigrants points out several aspects of their experiences in the European labor market. From the difficulty encountered due to the ceiling effect on social mobility to the complex dynamics of overqualification, these individuals navigate a landscape where barriers clash and intersect with aspirations. These dynamics can be furthermore observed with a closer examination of the Italian setting by drawing on data regarding the second generation of immigrants in Italy made available by the 2020 ISTAT report, as well as insights from Laura Zanfrini (2018; Conti et al. 2020).

Before observing data regarding the presence of the second generation in the Italian labor market, it is interesting to note the top professions that students in secondary schools would like to practice by drawing from the 2020 ISTAT report (Conti et al., 2020). In secondary schools, both among male students of immigrant and Italian-by-origin, the aspiration to become a footballer is predominant, with percentages of 14.1% and 10.4% respectively. Subsequently, there is a notable interest in vocations related to automotive repair (10.7% and 4.5%), particularly favored by children of immigrants. The culinary sector, encompassing roles like cook and pastry chef, also stands out,

representing 6.8% among children of immigrants and 7% for their counterpart. Other fields of interest include computer science, engineering, and athletics/sports coaching with close percentages. The only peculiarity is found among young Italian-by-origin who more frequently choose military-field professions compared to their counterparts. When considering the occupational preferences of female students in secondary schools, a notable predilection emerges for the roles of doctor and teacher, a pattern observed consistently among both children of immigrants and their Italian-by-origin counterparts. Following these preferences, professions like saleswoman (5.8%) and flight attendant (5.0%) gain traction prominently among daughters of immigrants. In contrast, girls in middle schools tend to show a heightened interest in socially impactful professions or those linked to the entertainment industry. Noteworthy is the preference among Italian-by-origin female students for the field of psychology (Conti et al., 2020).

**Box 3.3: Evelyne Afawuaa: an example of female Afro-Italian entrepreneurship**

Evelyne Afawuaa is an entrepreneur of Ghanaian descent that Annalisa Frisina and Camilla Hawthorne consider an icon among children of immigrants in Italy as mentioned in the essay *Riconoscersi nel successo di Evelyne, lottare nel ricordo di Abba* which can be translated as “Recognizing Oneself in Evelyne’s Success, Fighting in Memory of Abba” (Frisina, Hawthorne, 2015). In their work, the authors highlight the diverse achievements of a young woman who, despite a past limited by feelings of inferiority, strengthened her identity through entrepreneurship. The essay delves into the journey of Evelyne Afaawua, who founded the Afro-Italian Nappy Girls group in early 2014 to create a space for Afro-Italian girls wanting to learn how to care for their hair without using straightening creams, thus, to learn how to go natural. Of particular significance is the fact that the group is the first community for natural hair in Italy, providing information in the Italian language. Worth highlighting is the facts that how Evelyne appears as an icon of Afro-Italian success and has been praised in Italian magazines such as *Gioia* and *Donna Moderna*. Afaawua also participated in the TEDxMilanoWomen conference where she spoke about holding the double heritage of being a Ghanaian and Italian girl and how she decided to express this identity through

(continued)

her hair (Afaawua, 2015). In the same year, she became the first Afro-descendant to win the MoneyGram Award for immigrant entrepreneurship in Italy in the “Young Entrepreneur” category. Also in 2015, she won the “Best Blogger” award for Nappytalia at the Africa-Italy Excellence Awards. After the public recognition and success of the website, Evelyne then launched a line of made-in-Italy products for Afro and curly hair (Frisina, Hawthorne, 2015; Twumwah, 2020b).

*Sources: (Frisina and Hawthorne. 2017. “Riconoscersi nel successo di Evelyne, lottare nel ricordo di Abba”, A fior di pelle. ‘Razza’ e visualità); (Twumwah, 2020b. “Evelyne S. Afaawua”, Fratelli e Sorelle. Into Akosua’s World). <https://akosuamind.org/2020/07/10/evelyne-s-afaawua/>*

Having understood the aspirations of young second-generation immigrants, it is useful to mirror these aspirations with data that reveals the reality. To proceed in such manner, it is useful to acknowledge preemptively the need for refining the classification process when dealing with second-generation immigrants, a point highlighted by Zanfrini (2018) and previously mentioned. Having cleared such point, though data cannot be easily generalized, they already provide ample evidence supporting the expectation that children of immigrants might face challenges in their participation in the labor market, indicating a potential disadvantaged status. Data derived from the labor force survey confirms that second-generation immigrants aged 15-24 demonstrate increased levels of activity and employment compared to their Italian-by-origin peers, attributed to their early entry into the workforce. In the subsequent age frame, 25-34 years, where a majority of young Italian-by-origin have completed their education, young male second-generation immigrants even record lower unemployment rates than their counterparts. This can likely be attributed to the diverse career paths they pursue. Even when focusing on the 15-34 age group in the NEET condition (young people who are not engaged in study, work, or vocational training), the incidence of unemployment remains relatively similar between Italian-by-origin individuals and the children of immigrants, both for males and females, thereby dismissing the hypothesis of significant discrimination against children of immigrants in employment access (Zanfrini, 2018).

It is now necessary to further analyze the NEET condition because beyond the challenges faced in the labor market, the significant exclusion from this sphere could have enduring consequences for second-generation immigrants. The NEET phenomenon, predominant across Europe, is particularly evident in Italy. The country not only reports one of the highest incidences, with over 3 million young people who are neither in education nor employment in 2016, representing just under a quarter of the 15-34 age group, but it also reveals one of the largest differentials in favor of native Italians. For children of immigrants, the NEET rate reaches 35%. This situation comprises various life scenarios: individuals who have withdrawn from their education path prematurely and struggle to secure employment, those with high educational attainment but facing difficulties in securing stable employment, and those who have transitioned from school to an inactive status. This third category is primarily encountered among young second-generation immigrant women, being widespread. Within this group, the segment of individuals who have voluntarily detached from the labor market plays a substantial role in the statistic, revealing that nearly one young NEET corresponds to every two foreign young women residing in Italy (Zanfrini, 2018).

Shifting the attention to the roles assumed, a significant trend toward the lower positions of the occupational hierarchy becomes apparent, with a prevalence in manual and low-to-no qualification professions. It seems that, in addition to the inherent challenges faced by second generations, the additional factor arises from an integration model whereby immigrant families find themselves concentrated at the lower tiers of society. This further complicates the challenges associated with a generational impact, forcing them to compete with their Italian counterparts as they transition into the workforce. On one hand, they wrestle with raised expectations emphasized by merit-based discourse, closely tied to their academic accomplishments, and influenced by their family's socio-economic status. At the same time, they navigate the expectation of adaptability, a quality praised in discussions that support immigrants but do not entirely align with the cultural expectations embedded in the upbringing of young individuals in Italy (Cesareo, 2020). This leads to reconsider once again the issue of overqualification, a phenomenon that, as highlighted when examining the overall European context, also affects Italy. Referring to an OECD report from 2014, Zanfrini (2018) notes that children of immigrants have faster transitions from school to work, partly because they are

strongly present in vocational study paths chosen for their immediate employability. However, she points out that they then face greater difficulties in stabilizing their employment status, are more often unemployed than their peers, significantly underrepresented in qualified jobs, and more exposed to the risk of overqualification. Interestingly, when examining the most sought-for positions, the impact of younger age groups is more pronounced for second-generation immigrants than for Italian-by-origin.

While the Italian job market reveals the overemphasis on older generations, which suggests a potential decline in mobility between generations, the pathways of younger second-generation immigrants exercise more significant influence on shaping the upper classes of the labor market. Zanfrini (2018) employs data from 2015 from the Directorate General for Immigration and Integration Policies which shows that only 3.3% of Italian executives, 7.7% of entrepreneurs, and 17.7% of freelancers are under 35 years old. In contrast, among the immigrant community, these percentages rise to 18.8%, 58.3%, and 23.2%, respectively. Therefore, the younger generation, particularly second-generation immigrants, emerge as pivotal figures needed to revitalize the Italian integration model.

In essence, the labor market experiences of second-generation immigrants in Europe and Italy highlight a complex interplay whereby there are ethnic disparities, changes in job trends across generations, and the persistent challenge of overqualification. As these factors have been examined, further study requires not only statistical analysis but also an exploration of the lived narratives of these individuals to observe aspects that tend to go unnoticed in general discourse or that do not fully capture the global frame of the actual experiences that second-generation immigrants. Yet, as proposed from the beginning of this work is neither one side of the story over another that can be beneficial, rather it is the global potentially unbiased investigation that can pave the way to create a progressive development path in the narratives of second-generation immigrants. This understanding falls in line with the following quote.

In the public debate we often see competing discourses that either portray a negative or a positive picture of the second generation. We still find higher drop-out rates and underemployment or unemployment figures which need to be researched and discussed, but we also see a growing number of individuals who have done very well at school and/or on the labour market. We certainly need research into both patterns to give us the full picture, i.e. to address barriers and identify success factors. We believe that by studying individuals who have made it

‘against all odds’, i.e. by studying their individual or family characteristics, the support they received and the institutional arrangements that enabled their success, we can obtain clear indications about the factors that have held the less successful back. It is important to know these barriers, but only by studying the successful group can we understand how to overcome them. This is why we think that research on social mobility and inequality is not complete without studying the successful group (Schneider et al., 2022).

### **Box 3.3: In-Formazione: cultural diversity, an asset to professional success**

In-Formazione is an association that was established in 2019 as a proactive initiative of young professionals and students to contribute to social sustainability. Their focus on education, mentoring, coaching, and other activities indicates a commitment characterized by cultural diversity to support young individuals. The association’s role as a talent incubator is particularly noteworthy, as it seeks to provide tailored hard and soft skills to empower young people in building their educational and professional paths. In-Formazione’s mission to bridge cultural diversity and professional success aligns with the broader goal of fostering inclusivity and creating opportunities for individuals from diverse backgrounds. This recalls the commitment of the aforementioned Kany Fall in creating awareness for education. Unsurprisingly, she is part of the association. Overall, the In-Formazione association appears to be a promising initiative that addresses the intersection of cultural diversity and professional development. By acting as a bridge and offering specific support in terms of skills and guidance, the association aims to facilitate the success of young individuals on their educational and professional journeys (Di Federico, 2022; In-Formazione).

*Sources: (Di Federico, 2022. “Edward Enninful OBE premia la scrittrice Anna Osei ai Bulgari B.zero1 Aurora Awards”. Vogue Italia). <https://www.vogue.it/news/article/edward-enninful-anna-osei-bulgari>; (In-Formazione. “Chi siamo”). <https://www.in-formazione.eu/chi-siamo/>*

As observed, the narratives that are meant to be shared should not only provide insights into the experiences of individuals navigating challenges but also showcase examples of career success, exemplified by entrepreneurs like Evelyne Afawuaa

mentioned in Box 3.2, and the emergence of initiatives such as In-Formazione. These stories serve as pathways to understanding professional success and its attainability, as further portrayed in Boxes 1.3 and 3.3.

### **3.4 Onward migration: from Italy to the United Kingdom**

In the previous subchapters, the exploration of the condition of young people of African descent in the Italian labor market revealed a spectrum of challenges, ranging from the NEET phenomenon to the issue of overqualification. Inasmuch as it was pointed out that success stories are emerging, the evident challenges contribute to choosing the path of onward migration to different European countries. This subchapter delves into the intricacies of onward migration, also offering a comparative analysis with the United Kingdom's scenario.

Francesco Della Puppa (2021) summarizes insights from various scholars to offer a perspective on onward migration a phenomenon whereby TCNs resume migration to another country. In the specific EU context, there is a strategic use of EU citizenship to move between EU member states, as possessing such citizenship opens the prospect of intra-EU mobility and therefore is an instrumental resource. This possibility is seized in response to the dissatisfaction encountered in the initial European destinations with the persistently growing racism against migrants and the unsuccessful socioeconomic integration when dealing with welfare and unemployment. In the case of remigration from Southern Europe, it is determined by the precarity of conditions in the European labor markets and stricter regulations on migrants' legal status. Highly skilled immigrants with higher education also opt leaving for third-country destinations. In fact, knowing there is the chance to optimize their elevated skillset in another country leverages the choice of onward migration (Sorana, Castagnone, 2015). To aid the mobility, the support from social networks, family, and knowledge of compatriots in the new destination country plays a crucial role in shaping migratory decisions (Montagna et al., 2021).

Turning the focusing to Italy, the increasing number of immigrants leaving the country after obtaining citizenship confirms that its acquisition does not necessarily translate into remaining in the Italian territory. As a matter of fact, in the last ten years, there has been a consistent increase in the count of immigrants departing Italy after



gaining citizenship. According to ISTAT (as cited in Goglia, 2023), out of 669,000 individuals from non-EU countries who obtained citizenship between 2012 and 2017, about 42,000 have relocated abroad with a 25% returning to their country of origin and 75% re-emigrating to another European country. This trend in Italy reflects European patterns whereby socio-economic factors including social immobility and discrimination, contribute to the decision to re-emigrate. Parents, deeply concerned about the role these factors can have in their children's future, often play a pivotal role in the decision of moving to another EU country, making use of the Italian citizenship. Simultaneously, a notable percentage of young people make this choice independently. Among nearly 283,000 minors who gained citizenship from 2012 to 2017, about 7% emigrated abroad. Notably, almost 83% of this group opted to relocate within other European Union countries, with prominent destinations being the United Kingdom (41.6%), France (26.4%), and Germany (10.0%). The destinations of onward migration often reflect linguistic and cultural ties with migrants' original countries. For example, Italo-Moroccans tend to re-emigrate to France or Belgium while Italo-Nigerians tend to re-emigrate to the United Kingdom (Conti et al., 2020; Goglia, 2023).

Francesco Goglia (2023) points out that the United Kingdom emerges as a favored destination for TCNs in Italy, particularly those from Commonwealth countries such as Nigeria and Ghana. The phenomenon of onward migration to the United Kingdom has been on the rise since the 2008 economic crisis, involving thousands of migrants with regular residency status. Once again, factors such as better opportunities for education and work, family and friendship ties, access to welfare have contributed to the increasingly growing number of families involved in the onward migration. As of 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2021, the Italian Consulate in London reported a significant Italian population in England and Wales, totaling 446,971 individuals. Additional information, available since 2020, sheds light on their birthplaces. 221,196 were born in Italy, 108,170 in Great Britain, and 117,605 in a third country. This latter group includes both immigrants who acquired Italian citizenship and individuals from other countries who gained citizenship through descent. According to the Italian Consulate in London, among Italians born in a third country, there are individuals originating from Italo-Ghanaian (5%), Italo-South African (2.7%), and Italo-Nigerian (3%) backgrounds. These cases notably exemplify the

category termed “family movers” (Goglia, 2023) a group whose decision to emigrate is primarily driven by the aim of providing a better future for the second generation.

Examining onward migration through the lens of Ghanaian families provides a tangible example. Edmond Agyeman’s research (2022) enlightens the motives behind their migration. His findings underscore the perceived superiority of English education and the desire for improved prospects for their children as key factors influencing the choice to move. Importantly, these motivations are rooted in the challenges faced by Ghanaian families during their years of settlement in Italy. A significant catalyst for onward migration, as highlighted by Agyeman’s research, is the reaction to exclusion experienced by these families in Italy. After establishing roots in Italy, many Ghanaian families, faced with elements in Italian society that undermine the effects of long-term settlement, find themselves compelled to leave. This obligation is further underscored by the challenges encountered by the second generation within the Italian education system.

Parents’ aspirations for their children to attain university-level education clash with systemic barriers that frequently block these ambitions. The process of selecting schools, specifically, confines many within a system that limits their ability to access higher education. At the heart of the matter is a significant disparity between parents’ expectations and the limited opportunities at hand. This mismatch results in a shift, with children being directed towards vocational and technical education institutions. Despite

### **Box 3.4: Afro-Italian expats: thriving in London**

*The Expats* is a documentary series initiated by Johanne Affricot sharing the stories of onward migration of Afro-Italian creatives pursuing success outside Italy. This series is conceived with the dual purpose of illuminating the tapestry of diversity and stimulate awareness among Italians.

Johanne Affricot, herself native from Rome with Haitian and Ghanaian-American parents, amplifies a strong message. She highlights the Italian societal struggle in acknowledging ethnic diversity, contrasting this with other European nations where

(continued)

such awareness is more prevalent. In her perspective, the Italian society grapples with recognizing that an Italian can be of African, Asian, Middle Eastern, or South American descent.

Through compelling interviews, the documentary puts a spotlight on individuals like photographer Adaeze Ibheom and musician Stacey Gyandu, Afro-Italians who have found their footing in London. The narratives unveiled in these interviews accentuate a shared sentiment in the decision to relocate to the UK that was not just prompted by a perception of discrimination but by the belief that diligent efforts can pave the way to one's aspirations, unburdened by the weight of diversity, a burden they felt in Italy. Workwise, the interviews underscore the comparative ease of launching a career in one's chosen field or area of expertise in the UK. Noteworthy is the common thread that both Ibheom and Gyandu had at least one family member already established in the UK, facilitating their relocation, and providing a support system upon which they could lean if desired (Affricot, 2017; Nastro, 2017).

*Sources: (Affricot, 2017a. Italiano | Episodio 5 | The Expats Londra | Adaeze | by Johanne Affricot | GRIOTmag.com. YouTube). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X3550kbOqgE>; (Affricot, 2017b. Italiano | Episodio 6 | The Expats - Londra | Stacey Foxx | by Johanne Affricot | GRIOTmag.com. YouTube). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N22cOn4RNaQ> Nastro, Santa. (2017). "Torna The Expats, il format che racconta gli afroitaliani creativi. Con due episodi a Londra". *Artribune*. Available at: <https://www.artribune.com/arti-performative/cinema/2017/05/torna-expats-il-format-che-racconta-gli-afroitaliani-creativi-con-due-episodi-a-londra/>*

their education in Italy, these individuals face difficulties securing jobs after schooling, primarily because companies still favor hiring migrants with lower skills and weaker negotiating power. Consequently, for a considerable number of Ghanaian parents contemplating migration, the decision to pursue onward migration is not a matter of choice but rather an obligation (Agyeman, 2022). The intricate blend of exclusion in Italian society, limited educational opportunities for the second generation, and the realities of the job market contribute to this perspective. In the end, Italy's immigration

policy, which partly excludes integration, supports the common trend of Ghanaian families moving onward which is further reflected with the stories of Afro-Italians expats recounted in Box 3.4. The examination of young people of African descent in the Italian setting reveals a spectrum of challenges leading to onward migration. While acknowledging upcoming success stories, dissatisfaction and persistent obstacles contribute to choosing migration to other European countries.

Overall, the objective of this chapter was to offer a broad and general overview of the challenges and opportunities faced by young people of African descent in Europe. This exploration was conducted through the dual lenses of education and employment, intending to establish a connection with the earlier discussion from the previous chapters that contextualized the background upon which the experiences of second-generation immigrants in Europe unfold, encompassing issues of belonging and policy impact. Furthermore, the chapter sought to bridge the analytical insights with real-life narratives, as illustrated in the accompanying boxes, thus providing a multifaceted perspective on the subject as originally stated from the introduction.

## Conclusions

This thesis has embarked on an exploration of the intricate dynamics defining the challenges, experiences, and opportunities faced by young people of African descent in Europe. With a focus on Italy, allowing a closer view into the broader EU context, the research considered the multiple aspects relating to the lives of these young people, shedding light on both struggles and successes that shape their everyday existence. In order to comprehend these experiences, this work acknowledged the broader socio-cultural milieu within which their lives navigate. The EU, more and more characterized by the rich diversity of cultures, histories, and identities, served as the backdrop against which these narratives unfold. In light of this, the inquiry recognized that lived experiences are profoundly influenced by factors such as ethnicity, race, socio-economic status, and the evolving dynamics of multiculturalism within European societies. For this reason, a central aspect of the research was to point out and comprehend the challenges faced by these individuals on a day-to-day basis, spanning social integration, discrimination, and barriers to accessing educational and professional opportunities. By dissecting and contextualizing these challenges, the research detected the systemic issues that contribute to impediments faced by this demographic.

Such research intended to gain significance in its assertion on the need for academics, policymakers, and society at large about the realities encountered by young people of African descent. Interlacing different narratives, the research aimed at subtly contributing to a more informed and concerned understanding of the challenges this demographic confronts, the richness of their experiences, and the transformative opportunities that can shape their futures. Indeed, fostering such goal would not just be instrumental for a better quality of life of the group in focus but would significantly impact the present and future of the EU. Such affirmation comes from the understanding that the ever-growing presence of young people with migratory descent in Europe is anticipated to lead them to leaving a significant impact in society. Realizing the cruciality of this aspect, the thesis sought to join the voices that call for the need of promoting of positive change, advocating for inclusive policies and societal frameworks that empower and uplift young people with migratory descent to positively shape Europe in return.

The research explored the multifaceted aspects of social integration, investigating how second-generation immigrants navigate the complex web of societal structures. This included an examination of their interactions within educational institutions, community settings, and broader social circles. By taking into account the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion, the study uncovered some of the factors that facilitate or hinder the seamless integration of these individuals into European society. Moving beyond challenges, the exploration extended into understanding how the various experiences shape the identity construction of second-generation immigrants. This involved an examination of their interactions within the educational system, the complexities of cultural identity formation, and their integration into the broader societal fabric.

Recognizing the impact that intergenerational dynamics have in contributing to the formation of cultural identity, the thesis also considered the experiences of parents' background in constructing their children's identity. Eventually, the relationship between generational trajectories happens not only to influence identity formation from the household but also to determine the way in which society defines this identity and, as a consequence, interacts with the second generation. Due to this, the experiences and challenges encountered by first-generation immigrant parents happen to resonate within the lives of their children. Among these experiences, there can be the presence of episodes of overt or subtle discrimination acting as a pervasive challenge. Pointing this out is a way of exposing systemic inequalities and understanding what needs to be worked upon in order to encourage a dialogue for development and progress.

Having understood the interplay between identity and belonging, the thesis considered the global EU as a stage for understanding how geographical location, varying cultural landscapes, and distinct policy frameworks contribute to divergent experiences. Indeed, it was highlighted that the institutional contexts, encompassing educational systems, labor markets, and social welfare structures, differ across European nations influencing integration and social cohesion process in diverse ways. By comparing policy domains related to integration, the research aimed at uncovering best practices, downturns, and innovative approaches adopted by the EU at large. Inasmuch as EU migration and integration policies do not specifically consider the situation of second-generation immigrants', the implication of policymaking determines the translation of insights into actionable policies that can affect these individuals on a long term. Being

aware of this impact, the public engagement of the second generation becomes crucial. In fact, this demographic rises to give its input in community initiatives, civic activities, and endeavors contributing to societal development. The importance of this elements lies in the evolving role that this group has in shaping public discourse and actively participating in the public sphere.

Engagement in the public sphere reflects the societal impact that second-generation immigrants have, but also questions how their pathways are within society. This led to analyze the educational journey of second-generation immigrants as a fundamental aspect of personal development. On this note, the focus was directed towards the investigation of the presence, the performance, and the experiences of these young individuals within the educational system. This journey involves challenges but also achievements that are often unheard. In fact, there are noteworthy advancements in the educational achievements of the second generation illustrating how access to educational opportunities has evolved, considering factors such as enrollment rates, academic performance, and pursuit of higher education. The educational path eventually defines and guides the trajectory even within the labor market context. Indeed, the labor market represents a crucial arena where opportunities and challenges intersect once again. This requires examining how second-generation immigrants carve out spaces within the labor market, exploring the dynamics of employment, career progression, and the role of societal perceptions in shaping their professional journeys.

These considerations align with key assertions made by scholars that this work has referenced, in particular Laura Zanfrini (2018) and Jens Schneider (2022). Notably, Zanfrini is of particular significance at this conclusive overview stage given that she recognizes the vulnerability of the second generation to labor and social exclusion. However, she also underscores the importance of showcasing academic accomplishments and professional success, recognizing these achievements as noteworthy. Indeed, as this work intended to express, the objective to be pursue is not solely emphasizing the unheard positive narratives of second-generation immigrants, but to achieve a balanced perspective that acknowledges challenges while striving to attain and present achievements.

Zanfrini's (2018) perspective finds deeper relevance in conjunction with the insights provided by Schneider (2022), who extensively studied the positioning of

second-generation immigrants in the upper echelons of the labor market. This holds particular relevance to the entire work. Indeed, this perspective is another way of emphasizing that a focus on the success stories of those who have effectively achieved upward mobility, can serve as valuable examples for investigation. This aligns with the intended purpose of this work to share narratives of successful Afro-Italians, just like Scheider intentionally explored how the successful cohort faced and overcame barriers on their path to prominent positions. The author worked intending to identify key success factors that play a pivotal role in shaping individual trajectories, encompassing various attributes and circumstances which contribute to the remarkable achievements of the success group. Scrutinizing individual characteristics such as ambition, optimism, perseverance, resilience, and self-esteem, it emerges that these personal attributes influence the career paths and achievements of individuals within the success group. Family-oriented success projects and significant parental investment also have a significant impact in the broader context that encourage success among second-generation individuals. Indeed, the factor of inheriting and fulfilling the mobility dream initiated by parents' migration can be a drive to attain success and to intentionally seek to encounter achievements.

The necessity of studying success groups goes beyond acknowledging the individuals as being achievers, indeed their experiences position them as influential figures contributing to broader societal changes. They are represented as pioneers and spokespersons for their communities and their peers. Their contributions to societal changes are highlighted, delving into how they serve as catalysts for breaking down barriers, reshaping narratives, and actively participating in the transformation of social dynamics. Just like Schneider (2022) advocates for sharing the success stories and paths to provide a model for exemplification, this thesis shared the narratives of different Afro-Italians as narrated by them, with the aim of giving more representation, making unheard voices heard while allowing to know more stories of achievements.

With this objective, the various boxes illustrated the stories and perspectives of Igiaba Scego (Box 1.1), Abril Muvumbi (Box 2.4), and Kany Fall (Box 3.2) among others to depict the efforts of individuals collectively sharing a commitment to reshaping the narrative for Afro-Italians. The stories of their contributions spanned diverse fields, including literature, blogging, advocacy, entrepreneurship, and cultural preservation.



Igiaba Scego (Box 1.1) represents the impact of literature to make known the struggles of Afro-Italians and express hopes for the future, while Bellamy OgaK (Box 1.2) employs a platform-driven approach through blogging to also raise awareness about the challenges faced by Afro-Italians. Anna Osei (Box 1.3) and Abril Muvumbi (Box 2.4) both demonstrate a dedication to preserving cultural roots while navigating socio-economic landscapes and advocating for progress in diverse ways. The Afroveronesi association (Box 1.3) tell of a reality that promotes diversity and unity. Individuals like Kany Fall (Box 3.2) and Evelyne Afawuaa (Box 3.3) contribute to guiding and showcasing the achievements of Afro-Italians, while platforms like Radio Radicale’s “Eccellenze Afrodiscendenti” and Susanna Twumwah’s blog (Box 3.1) provide channels to highlight the successes of Afro-Italians, offering diverse representations. The exploration of Afro-Italians’ experiences in London tells of struggles in matters of identity and belonging can lead to an onward migration to countries where the perceived advantages (Box 3.4) outweigh the care for the country that has raised them. These few selected narratives offer a broadly outlined picture of Afro-Italian experiences, emphasizing representation, cultural identity, and the pursuit of success amid challenges. This leads to suggest a further comparative analysis of these and other stories as they can serve as avenues for research that considers the impact of the diverse approaches used by these young people in carving the reality around them. Otherwise stated, a further analysis could focus on the choices behind the various paths undertaken and could consider positives notes and downturns of the different outcomes.

With this cue for further analysis, the overarching perspective of this thesis is restated. Once again, there is the need to spotlight the broader narrative of empowerment and agency for second-generation immigrants, signaling the possibility for these individuals to achieve notable success. This is made possible by comprehending the importance of being aware of which are the strategies employed by young individuals with migratory backgrounds in the intent to amplify their voices, influence policy discourse, and bring about tangible transformations. The critical role of identifying success factors is deemed as a particularly useful and potentially needed step in policymaking. Indeed, through a broad understanding of the drivers of success, policymakers could develop targeted initiatives that address barriers, strengthen supportive frameworks, and foster cooperative action for a more inclusive and equitable

EU. Above all, examining the experiences and life stories of young people of African descent can serve as a benchmark for guiding new Afrodescendants, who are becoming numerous and, consequently, can wield greater potential influence on the future of Europe. For this reason, it is deemed important for academia to engage with these narratives as to achieve a far-reaching understanding and provide the necessary insights for the successful integration and shaping of the evolving Afro-descendant narrative in Europe and that of second-generation immigrants as a whole.

## Bibliography

Adam, Ilke and Daniel Thym. (2019). "Integration and Values". *From Tampere 20 to Tampere 2.0: Towards a new European consensus on migration*. European Policy Centre, pp. 73-86.

Affricot, Johanne. (2017a). *Italiano | Episodio 5 | The Expats Londra | Adaeze | by Johanne Affricot | GRIOTmag.com*. YouTube. Available online at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X3550kbOqgE>

Affricot, Johanne. (2017b). *Italiano | Episodio 6 | The Expats - Londra | Stacey Foxx | by Johanne Affricot | GRIOTmag.com*. YouTube. Available online at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N22cOn4RNaQ>

Agyeman, Edmond A. (2022). "Ghanaian Immigrants in a Northern Italian Town: Between Social Exclusion and Onward Migration to the UK". *Journal of International Migration and Integration*. Springer, vol. 23 n. 1, pp. 285-302.

Algan, Yann, Christian Dustmann, Albrecht Glitz, and Alan Manning. (2009). "The Economic Situation of First- and Second-Generation Immigrants in France, Germany, and the UK". *IZA Discussion Paper no. 4514*, Bonn: Institute for the Study of Labor.

Andall, Jacqueline. (2002). "Second-generation attitude? African-Italians in Milan". *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, vol. 28, no. 3, pp. 389-407.

Antonsich, Marco. (2022). "The Diversity Continuum: Blurring the Boundaries Between Internal and External. Others Among Italian Children of Migrants". *Loughborough University*.

Bauloz, Céline, Zana Vathi, and Diego Acosta. (2019). "Migration, inclusion and social cohesion: Challenges, recent developments and opportunities". *World Migration Report 2020*, pp. 186-206.

"Bellamy OgaK: 'Il colore della pelle parla per te'". (2022). *La 27Ora, Corriere della Sera*. Available online at: [https://www.corriere.it/video-  
articoli/2022/10/12/bellamy-ogak-l-italia-paese-razzista-colore-pelle-parla-te/5f4f9690-  
3f06-11ed-b6e3-34338f1c69a0.shtml](https://www.corriere.it/video-articoli/2022/10/12/bellamy-ogak-l-italia-paese-razzista-colore-pelle-parla-te/5f4f9690-3f06-11ed-b6e3-34338f1c69a0.shtml)

Bello, Barbara G. (2011). "Empowerment of young migrants in Italy through nonformal education: putting equality into practice". *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, vol. 16, no. 3, pp. 348-359.

Bianchi, Georgia E. (2011). "Italiani nuovi o nuova Italia? Citizenship and attitudes towards the second generation in contemporary Italy". *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, vol. 16, no. 3, pp. 321-333.

Billau, Andrea. (2023). "Eccellenze Afrodiscendenti - Intervista a Susanna Owusu Twumwah, communication manager di origini ghanesi". *Eccellenze Afrodiscendenti*. Available online at: <https://www.radioradicale.it/scheda/694391/eccellenze-afrodiscendenti-intervista-a-susanna-owusu-twumwah-comunication-manager-di>

Bolzman, Claudio, Laura Bernardi, and Le Goff, Jean-Marie. (2017). "Situating children of migrants across borders and origins: A methodological overview".

Capesciotti, Marta and Silvia Sansonetti. (2021). "The Socioeconomic Position of Women of African, Middle Eastern, Latin American and Asian Descent Living in the European Union". *European Union*.

Cesareo, Vincenzo (Editor). (2020). *The Twenty-fifth Italian Report on Migrations 2019*. Milano: Fondazione ISMU.

Chimienti, Milena, Alice Bloch, Laurence Ossipow and Catherine Wihtol de Wenden. (2019). "Second generation from refugee backgrounds in Europe". *Comparative Migration Studies*, vol. 7, no. 40, p. 1.

Conti, Cinzia, Sabrina Prati and Salvatore Strozza. (2020). *Identità e percorsi di integrazione delle seconde generazioni in Italia*. Rome: ISTAT.

Crul, Maurice, Jens Schneider and Frans Lelie. (2012). *The European Second Generation Compared: Does the Integration Context Matter?* Amsterdam University Press.

Della Puppa, Francesco, Nicola Montagna and Eleonore Kofman. (2021). "Onward migration and intra-European mobilities: A critical and theoretical overview". *International Migration*, vol. 59, pp. 16-28.

Di Federico, Chiara. (2022). "Edward Enniful OBE premia la scrittrice Anna Osei ai Bulgari B.zero1 Avrora Awards." Available online at: <https://www.vogue.it/news/article/edward-enniful-anna-osei-bulgari>.

Dustmann, Christian, Tommaso Frattini and Gianandrea Lanzara. (2011a). “Educational Achievement of Second Generation Immigrants: An International Comparison”. *Centro Studi Luca d’Agliano Development Studies Working Paper 314*, pp. 3-25.

Dustmann, Christian and Tommaso Frattini. (2011b). “Immigration: The European experience”. *Centro Studi Luca d’Agliano Development Studies Working Paper 326*.

European Network Against Racism. (2019). *ENAR’s 10 EU elections demands to end racism in the European Union*. Available at: <https://www.enar-eu.org/EUelectionsdemands/>

European Commission. (2009). “An EU Strategy for Youth – Investing and Empowering: A renewed open method of coordination to address youth challenges and opportunities (COM(2009) 200 final)”. *Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee, and the Committee of the Regions*, Brussels.

Eurostat. (2016). “Second generation immigrants in the EU generally well integrated into the labour market”. *Eurostat Press Office*.

Fleischmann, Fenella and Jaap Dronkers. (2007). “The Effects of Social and Labour Market Policies of EU-countries on the Socio-Economic Integration of First and Second Generation Immigrants from Different Countries of Origin”. *EUI RSCAS 2007/19, European Forum*.

Frisina, Annalisa and Camilla Hawthorne. (2017). “Riconoscersi nel successo di Evelyne, lottare nel ricordo di Abba”. *A fior di pelle. ‘Razza’ e visualità*. Ombre Corte, pp. 179-195.

Garcés-Mascareñas, Blanca and Rinus, Penninx. *Integration processes and policies in Europe: Contexts, levels and actors*. Springer Nature, 2016.

Ghaus-Pasha, Aisha. (2005). “Role of civil society organizations in governance”. *6th Global Forum on Reinventing Government Towards Participatory and Transparent Governance*. Seoul.

Goglia, Francesco. (2023). “La onward migration di nuovi italiani in Inghilterra: ristrutturazione di repertori linguistici complessi e mantenimento linguistico”. *Italiano LinguaDue*, vol. 15, no. 1.

Guild, Elspeth, Sergio Carrera and Ngo Chun Luk. (2017). “The integration of immigrants and legal paths to mobility to the EU: Some surprising (and encouraging) facts”. *CEPS Commentary*, Brussels.

Hawthorne, Camilla (2022). *Contesting Race and Citizenship: Youth Politics in the Black Mediterranean*. Cornell University Press.

Kanza, Charline and Lorenzo Parolin. (2023). “Inclusione, identità, diritti: l’esperienza di ‘Afroveronesi’ come buona pratica di intercultura permanente”. *Labsus*. Available online at: <https://www.labsus.org/2023/05/buone-pratiche-di-intercultura-permanente-lesperienza-di-afroveronesi/>.

IOM. (2021). *Include-EU. Regional and local expertise, exchange and engagement for enhanced social cohesion in Europe*. IOM, Rome.

In-Formazione. *Chi siamo*. Available online at: <https://www.in-formazione.eu/chi-siamo/>

OECD/European Commission. (2023). “Integration of young people with foreign-born parents”. *Indicators of Immigrant Integration 2023: Settling In*, pp. 165-209. OECD Publishing, Paris.

Osei, Anna. (2023). *Mollo tutto e vado in UK: lo stile afroitaliano di Nyny Goungou e Franco Appiah conquista Londra*. Vogue Italia. Available online at: <https://www.vogue.it/article/nyny-goungou-franco-appiah-brand-moda-sostenibile>

Manchenko Maryna and Laura Westerveen. (2019). “(In)visible Generations: From Integration to Equality.” *IES Policy Brief*, no. 2.

Martino, Daniele. (2020). “Voci di nuovi italiani (2)” *Doppio Zero*. Available online at: <https://www.doppiozero.com/voci-di-nuovi-italiani-2>

Milan, Chiara. (2022). “Claiming rights. The mobilization of youth of migrant descent for access to citizenship rights in Italy.” *Citizenship Studies*, vol. 26, no. 3, pp. 322-339.

Minello, Alessandra and Nicola Barban. (2012). “The Educational Expectations of Children of Immigrants in Italy”. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, vol. 643, no. 1, pp. 78-103.

Montagna, Nicola, Francesco Della Puppa and Eleonore Kofman. (2021). “Onward migration: An introduction”. *International Migration*, vol. 59, pp. 8-15.

Mügge, Liza and Marleen Van der Haar. (2016). “Who is an immigrant and who requires integration? Categorizing in European policies”. *Integration processes and policies in Europe: contexts, levels and actors*, pp 77-90.

Nastro, Santa. (2017). “Torna The Expats, il format che racconta gli afroitaliani creativi. Con due episodi a Londra”. *Artribune*. Available online at: <https://www.artribune.com/arti-performative/cinema/2017/05/torna-expats-il-format-che-racconta-gli-afroitaliani-creativi-con-due-episodi-a-londra/>

Ogak, Bellamy. (2020). “Professionista in finanza offre coaching su università e lavoro agli italiani afrodiscendenti ed è subito boom di richieste”. *Afroitalian Souls*. Available online at: <https://www.afroitaliansouls.it/esperta-di-finanza-offre-coaching-su-universita-e-lavoro-agli-italiani-afrodiscendenti-ed-e-subito-boom-di-richieste/>.

Pasini, Nicola and Marta Regalia. (2020). “The European Elections”. *The Twenty-fifth Italian Report on Migrations 2019*, pp. 71-80.

Perchinig, Bernhard. (2011). “The Development of EU Immigration and Integration Policy and Its Consequences for Legal and Illegal Immigrants”. *TS Vedran Džihic, Looming Shadows-Migration and Integration in a Time of Upheaval. European and American Perspectives*, pp. 23-49.

Polman, Daniel, Marjolein Van Eerd and Zwaan, Pieter. (2022). “Connecting the dots: a closer look at the linkage between EU implementation experiences and EU policy change”. *Journal of European Integration*, vol. 44, no. 2, pp. 207-224

Rete G2. *Chi siamo*. Available online at: <https://www.secondegenerazioni.it/about/>

Rete G2. *L'Italia sono anch'io*. Available at: <https://www.secondegenerazioni.it/italia-sono-anchio/>

Riniolo, Veronica. (2019). “The New faces of change: The second generation in Italy”. *The Twenty-fifth Italian report on migrations*, pp. 103-114.

Russell, King, Michael Collyer. (2016). “Migration and development framework and its links to integration”. *Integration processes and policies in Europe: Contexts, levels and actors*, pp.167-188.

Scego, Igiaba. (2019). *Future: Il domani narrato dalle voci di oggi*, Effequ.

Schneider, Jens, Maurice Crul, and Andreas Pott. (2022). *New social mobility: Second generation pioneers in Europe*. Springer Nature.

Scholten, Peter and Penninx Rinus. (2016). “The multilevel governance of migration and integration”. *Integration processes and policies in Europe: Contexts, levels and actors*, pp. 91-108.

Thomassen, Bjørn. (2010). ““Second generation immigrants’ or ‘Italians with immigrant parents’? Italian and European perspectives on immigrants and their children”. *Bulletin of Italian Politics*, vol. 2, no. 1, pp. 21-44.

Toma, Sorana and Eleonora Castagnone (2015). “What Drives Onward Mobility within Europe? The Case of Senegalese Migrations between France, Italy and Spain”. *Population*, vol. 70, no. 1, pp. 65-95.

Twumwah, Akosua O. (2020a). “Abril K. Muvumbi” *Fratelli e Sorelle*. Into Akosua’s World. Available online at: <https://akosuamind.org/2020/04/19/abril-k-muvumbi/>

Twumwah, Akosua O. (2020b). “Evelyne S. Afaawua” *Fratelli e Sorelle*. Into Akosua’s World. Available online at: <https://akosuamind.org/2020/07/10/evelyne-s-afaawua/>

Van Wolleghem, Pierre Georges (2019). “The EU’s Integration Policy and the New Multiannual Financial Framework”. *The Twenty-fifth Italian Report on Migrations 2019*.

Vlasta Jalušič, Veronika Bajt and Rachel Lebowitz (2019). “Eu Policy Framework for Integration of Migrant Children”. *Migrant children and communities in a transforming Europe*. Znanstveno-raziskovalno središče Koper.

Zanfrini Laura. (2018). “Cittadini di un mondo globale. Perché le seconde generazioni hanno una marcia in più”. *Studi Emigrazione*, LV, no. 209.