REPCHANCE Europe Study Reveals Persistent Underrepresentation of Immigrant-Origin MPs Across Key European Countries

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- **Immigrant-origin populations remain underrepresented in the national parliaments of Germany, the Netherlands, Spain, Switzerland, and the UK, with the Netherlands having the highest share (19%) and Spain the lowest (2%).**
- **While representation has increased over the last decade (2012-2021), progress has been slow, except in Germany (+7 percentage points) and the UK (+4 percentage points).**
- **In Germany, the proportion of immigrant-origin MPs is 11.6 percent after the 2025 federal election, showing little change from 2021 (11.3 percent).**

Berlin/Stuttgart, March 18, 2025 – Immigrant-origin members of parliament (MPs) remain persistently underrepresented in key European countries, according to the recent REPCHANCE Europe study funded by the Robert Bosch Stiftung. The research on five European democracies—Germany, the Netherlands, Spain, Switzerland, and the UK—reveals that, despite modest progress over the past decade, the share of immigrant-origin MPs continues to fall significantly short of reflecting their share of the population in each country.

The study highlights stark disparities in representation. The Netherlands leads with the highest proportion of immigrant-origin MPs at 19%, followed by the UK at 15%, Switzerland at 14%, and Germany at 11%. In contrast, Spain lags behind with just 2%. While representation has increased in all five countries since 2012, the pace of progress has been uneven. Germany saw the most significant rise (+7 percentage points), while Spain made minimal gains. The UK and Switzerland experienced modest improvements of 4 and 2 percentage points, respectively.

Professor Dr. Andreas Wüst, coordinator of the comparative study and study director for Germany, noted, “The issue is not about achieving exact proportional representation but ensuring fair opportunities for all. Political parties need to ensure equal political opportunities for the immigrant-origin population, yet several parties still have significant deficits pertaining to candidates, representatives and office holders."

Political Affiliation and Barriers to Political Aspirations

The REPCHANCE Europe study reveals that immigrant-origin MPs are more likely to affiliate with left-leaning parties, especially in Germany and Switzerland, and to a lesser extent in the UK and in the Netherlands. The decision to pursue political office is often influenced by growing up in politically engaged families, but mobilization by party officials often triggers a candidacy. However, election success largely depends on factors like party list placement and the likelihood of winning constituencies.

Once in office, immigrant-origin MPs often face systemic and personal barriers, including discrimination, hate speech, and being instrumentalized for symbolic purposes, the study finds. Women, in particular, confront the compounded challenges of racism and sexism. Additionally, immigrant-origin politicians are often expected to focus on migration and integration issues, which is neither the intention of many nor of benefit for their broader political ambitions, as their expertise is confined to a limited range of topics.

Policy Recommendations for Enhanced Political Inclusion

To address these challenges, the researchers propose concrete policy measures. These range from an expansion of voting rights and educational initiatives on how politics and the political system works to demands on parties to guarantee equal opportunities. Dr. Ferdinand Mirbach, Senior Expert in the Immigration Society team at the Robert Bosch Stiftung, emphasized, “Increasing political representation of immigrant-origin communities is essential for a functioning democracy. Political parties, civil society, and institutions must actively create opportunities and remove barriers to ensure that a variety of voices are heard in decision-making." In order to improve political representation, study authors call for stronger anti-discrimination measures, improved recruitment and training processes within political parties, and robust protective measures against hate speech and violence targeting minority politicians.

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About REPCHANCE Europe

REPCHANCE Europe
examines the parliamentary representation of immigrant-origin politicians in Germany, the Netherlands, Spain, Switzerland, and the UK. The study spans a decade (2012–2021) and combines quantitative data with 175 personal interviews to understand political career trajectories and the factors influencing political engagement. The study was carried out by researchers at the Munich University of Applied Sciences, the University of Neuchâtel, the University of Amsterdam, and Science Po Paris. REPCHANCE Europe is funded by the Robert Bosch Stiftung, Stiftung Mercator Schweiz, and Porticus.

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