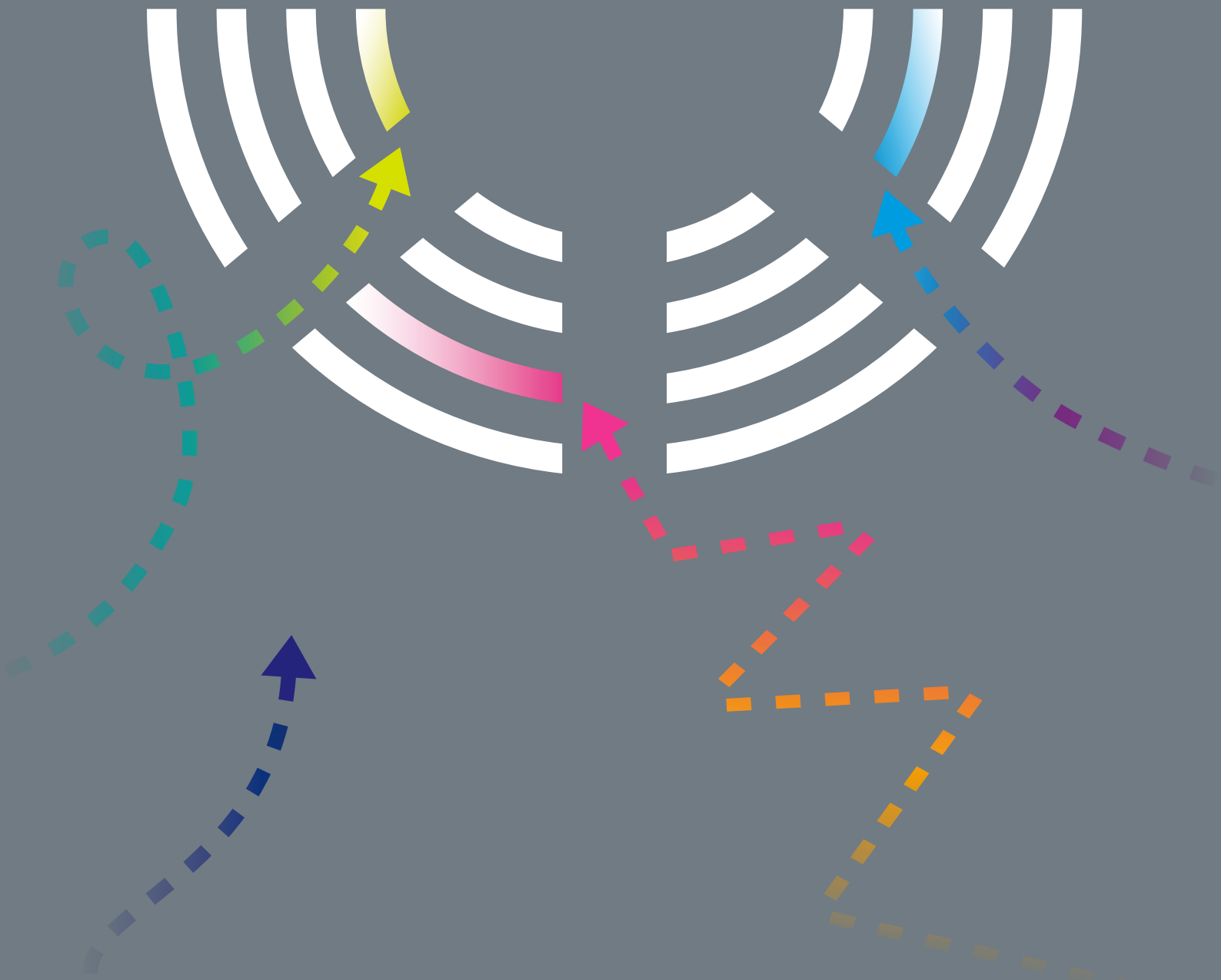

REPCHANCE EUROPE

Drivers and Obstacles to Minority Representation

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FOREWORD

Representation Matters: Building a Cohesive and Democratic Europe

Europe has always been a continent shaped by movement and migration. In recent years, the arrival of students, professionals, and those seeking refuge has underscored this enduring dynamic. But this is by no means a new story – for centuries, European societies have evolved with the contribution of people on the move. Since the 1960s, for example, countries like Germany and Switzerland welcomed large numbers of workers to rebuild their post-war economies. Many stayed, becoming integral parts of these societies. Former colonial powers such as the Netherlands and Spain have long experienced immigration from their former spheres of influence, while the United Kingdom, through its ties to the Commonwealth, continues to attract people from across the globe.

As a result, Europe is, and will continue to be, culturally and ethnically diverse. But it's not about having diversity, it's about living it; representation in decision-making processes is essential for fostering truly inclusive and equitable societies. Policies that affect the lives of migrants and minorities must also be shaped by those who share these experiences and perspectives. Representation in parliaments not only improves policy outcomes but also sends a powerful message about belonging. When people see themselves and their communities reflected in political offices, it builds trust in institutions and fosters greater societal engagement. Representation helps break down prejudices, and strengthens the bonds that hold societies together.

As foundations committed to advancing democracy and social cohesion, we see it as our responsibility to contribute to this important discourse. Supporting this research on the political representation of people of immigrant origin in five European countries – Germany, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Spain, and the United Kingdom – was therefore a priority for us. This study sheds light on the progress made and the challenges that remain in ensuring fair and inclusive political participation. We hope it sparks meaningful dialogue on how to foster more inclusive political systems that better reflect the diverse societies they serve.

We extend our sincere gratitude to the scientific teams at the Munich University of Applied Sciences, the University of Neuchâtel, the University of Amsterdam, and Sciences Po Paris: Andreas M. Wüst, Laura Morales, Liza Mügge, Gianni D'Amato, Henning Bergmann, Gözde Çelik, Zahra Runderkamp, Claire Vincent-Mory, Jana Bobokova, Leonie Mugglin,

Carles Pamies, Didier Ruedin, Melanie Ihuoma, Dina Bader, and Silja Gerhard. Their dedication and expertise made this comprehensive study possible.

In these turbulent times, as attacks on democracy intensify, and protectionist nationalism continues to rise, championing open and inclusive societies is more critical than ever. Excluding entire segments of the population weakens democratic institutions and undermines societal resilience. A truly democratic and cohesive Europe must reflect the diversity of its people, ensuring every voice is heard and valued. Together, we must work toward a political landscape that empowers everyone to participate in shaping our shared future – because our democracy depends on us.

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Representing all funding institutions

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Executive Summary

The project **REPCHANCE Europe deals with the parliamentary representation of immigrant-origin politicians in Germany, the Netherlands, Spain, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom.** For the study, quantitative data on biographical, political and parliamentary career trajectories of politicians, for a ten-year period (2012–2021) have been collected, as well as 175 personal interviews – with a focus on supportive factors – have been conducted.

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.

The main quantitative results are:

- In all five European countries analyzed, **the immigrant-origin population is underrepresented in parliament.** At the end of 2021, the share was highest in the Netherlands (19%), followed by the UK (15%), Switzerland (14%), and Germany (11%). In Spain, the share was by far the lowest (2%).

- Within a ten-year period (2012–2021), **the shares of immigrant-origin parliamentarians have increased in all countries.** This happened very slowly in Spain, and not much in Switzerland as well as in the Netherlands (less than 2 percentage points). The rise in the UK was steeper (4 percentage points), only topped by Germany (7 percentage points). Germany, however, started with a comparatively low share of 4% in 2012.

- **Party ideology is associated with levels of immigrant-origin representation.** While there are also immigrant-origin MPs in centrist and in center-right parties, the bulk of them belong to parties on the center-left and left. The pattern is most visible in Germany and Switzerland, to a lesser degree in the Netherlands and the UK where stronger center-right and right parties have a comparatively high number of immigrant-origin MPs. An ideological pattern cannot be detected in Spain, probably due to the low levels of representation of immigrant-origin MPs altogether.

- **Among immigrant-origin MPs, the share of women is higher** than among MPs with no foreign ancestry. Once again, this does not apply to Spain. While the share of women among immigrant-origin MPs is generally higher, the differences are sometimes more pronounced in parties of the center and center-right. Here, a lower share of women MPs in general can be observed.

- The ancestry of immigrant-origin MPs reflect country-specific migration patterns. Across the five countries, some origins are quite well represented, but **there are relevant immigrant-origin groups that are significantly underrepresented.** This particularly applies to former Soviet origins in Germany (the so-called ethnic resettlers), as well as for Moroccan, Romanian, and Colombian origins in Spain, or for Portuguese origins in Switzerland. In the Netherlands the representation of countries reflects former recruitment of labor and the country's colonial past.

- **Parliamentary careers end for various reasons that, at least in some countries, cannot be easily detected.** Both in the Netherlands and in Switzerland, parliamentarians avoid leaving in conflict or blaming the party for the end of their careers. In the UK, most careers end at the ballot box when MPs lose their seats. In Germany and in Spain, however, most careers end because parties either do not re-nominate the MPs or do not place them in secure enough list positions or constituencies.

The main results from the interviews are:

- When asked about **important factors for their aspirations to become a politician,** many refer to growing up in a **"political family"** or in a public-service oriented family, sometimes focused on classical issues of labor rights. **Issues regarding social justice** – often linked to experiences of injustice and discrimination – were frequently motivating factors to join politics. **Crucial events,** like anti-immigrant attacks or hostility in the aftermath of 9/11, were additional motivating factors. Finally, **mobilization by party members or officials,** sometimes including targeted recruitment, often triggered political engagement.

- **In the phase of candidate nomination, support from civil society and ethnic communities can be quite helpful for many.** Early political engagement in a **political (youth) organization** is of advantage. Further, support by a **personal network (family,**

friends, etc.) and by **mentors** who sometimes have already been active in politics.

- To get elected, a promising list place or constituency is deemed one of the most relevant factors for success. Therefore, **personal contacts with decision-makers for candidate nomination in the party** are extremely helpful. Parties, and especially those on the political left, seek to diversify their candidates or lists, especially in **diverse and urban contexts.** While in Germany, Switzerland, and the Netherlands, direct appeals of immigrant-origin candidates to minority electorates seem common, this is less the case in the United Kingdom and in Spain.

- **Specific programs** to enhance the political representation of immigrant-origin citizens are a **German particularity.** In the Netherlands, parties offer so-called “kader” programs for political aspirants. Nevertheless, **financial support in the form of scholarships or specific training offerings** are beneficial for a political career, and especially in Switzerland, **informal mentoring** appears to be very helpful for political success, but less so once the career has advanced.

- **The road to repeated success is paved by policy expertise, hard work, a stable political network, resilience, a certain degree of popularity, and a local base.** While immigrant-origin MPs often need to work much harder than others, they also tend to be **pigeonholed in migration-related policy areas.** Moreover, while migration issues can hardly be ignored by immigrant-origin MPs, they tend to lose centrality the longer their career runs. **An exclusive focus on migration-related issues is often seen as a constraint for a political career rather than an asset.**

- The importance of a **supportive local base** has especially been mentioned in the UK, Switzerland, and Germany. Electoral support or support for (re-)nomination are crucial for a lasting political career. Presence and interaction in the constituency are necessary to be able to stay in politics. With its direct-democratic component, **active support for referenda, petitions or strikes at the local level in Switzerland can be decisive** for continuous political support.

- While successive **networking** certainly contributes to success in politics, it was **a relevant topic only for the German interviewees.** Some former immigrant-origin MPs in this country think that the lack of a good network contributed to the end of their careers. While intra-party networks are useful, inter-party networks are not considered to affect re-election.

- **Prejudice, discrimination, hate speech and violence** are reported by interviewees in all countries and across parties. Micro-racism has been reported repeatedly but also threats and violence against MPs and family members. In the Swiss context, **othering** seems to happen when immigrant-origin MPs are said to "not be entitled to criticize anything Swiss" or retorted "If you are not happy, go back to your country".

- **Sexism** is another discriminatory pattern that was often evoked, sometimes referred to as being a bigger problem than racism. However, there are reports both on demeaning comments switching from sexism to racism and back, and on racist comments amplified by sexist remarks **(intersectional discrimination).**

- When immigrant-origin MPs are **pigeonholed over a longer period, treated as tokens** for migration-related issues and ethnic communities, and they are not able to get recognition on a broader policy base, the **decision to quit politics becomes a serious consideration.**

- At the end of the report, the researchers of **REPCHANCE Europe formulate 11 recommendations.** The first two pertain to the legal frame (voting rights, quotas), the next two to **enhancing knowledge and motivation** (political engagement), another two are **directed to the (civil) society** (diversity, anti-discrimination), but the bulk of recommendations (4) is **directed to the political parties** (recruitment and role models, training programs, structural (anti-)discrimination and tokenism, awareness concerning hate speech and violence). Finally, **continuous monitoring efforts and reporting** on the topic are considered necessary.

1. INTRODUCTION

Immigration has shaped the societies of Germany, The Netherlands, Spain, Switzerland and the United Kingdom, but the socio-political integration of immigrant-origin citizens lags behind. Under the premise that immigrant-origin citizens should have the same chances to get nominated as parliamentary candidates and to pursue a political career, *REPCHANCE Europe* investigates the paths of sitting immigrant-origin parliamentarians into politics and of those re-elected to their parliamentary career. Based on the analyses of both quantitative and qualitative data in five European countries, *REPCHANCE Europe* allows for a comparative view on the parliamentary representation of immigrant-origin citizens in the second decade of the 21st century.

The analysis consists of two components. First, the numbers, developments and the patterns of immigrant-origin representation in five national parliaments are presented. Second, the main results of in-depth analyses of 175 semi-structured interviews with immigrant-origin parliamentarians are presented and discussed. While the analysis detects several country-specific patterns, comparative perspectives allow for a broader understanding of general triggers for the parliamentary representation and careers of immigrant-origin citizens as well as for the obstacles politically active citizens of immigrant origin face.

The focus of *REPCHANCE Europe* on supportive factors for political careers allows for several recommendations on how to facilitate a fairer representation of immigrant-origin citizens. Yet, facilitation is only one side of the coin. Several peculiarities and obstacles for the political integration of individuals of immigrant origin in the countries studied point to the necessity of immigration countries in liberal democracies to accept and allow for the political integration of underrepresented groups. Consequently, societies and especially parties need to contribute to making democracies and parliaments more inclusive.

2. REPRESENTATION OF IMMIGRANT-ORIGIN MPS IN COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

Building on the analytical concept for the parliamentary representation of immigrant-origin citizens in Germany (*Bergmann* et al. 2024), similar research was conducted in four other European countries. Three of these countries differ significantly from the German case to varying degrees: the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and Spain. A substantial component of their immigration history is linked to their colonial past. Since the early 20th century the UK has been open to migration specifically from the former colonies, while the Netherlands also recruited foreign labor from other countries, similar to the case of Germany. Meanwhile, Spain transformed from being an emigration to becoming an immigration country in the 1980s (*Hollifield* et al. 2022). Integration policies and their developments significantly differ from multi-ethnic traditions in the UK over multicultural policies in the Netherlands followed by nativist components in the last decade, to cyclical but rather pragmatic policies towards immigrants in Spain. Contrary to these cases, Switzerland can be considered most similar to Germany with a restrictive guestworker concept in the 20th century, and even more restrictive naturalization policies than its northern neighbor well into the 21st century.

All in all, the five countries represent a substantial degree of variation with respect to immigration and integration policies. This has potential effects on the socio-political integration of the immigrant-origin population which *REPCHANCE Europe* addresses. Thus, this report compiles and compares the main patterns of immigrant-origin MP representation in five Western European democracies: Germany, the Netherlands, Spain, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom. To reduce complexity, we deal with the directly elected chambers and their parliamentarians which can be called lower houses of bicameral legislative branches existing in all five countries.

The *Bundestag* is Germany's directly elected parliament. Its 598 regular members are elected every four years via a mixed-member proportional representation (PR) system (299 via constituencies and 299 via party lists). Due to overhang and compensation seats the real size of the *Bundestag* is usually higher (736 members after the 2021 election). The mentioned seats are allocated to compensate for a disproportion caused by more directly elected candidates of a party than their overall party vote share would allow.

The *Tweede Kamer* is the second chamber or lower house of the Netherlands. The parliament has 150 seats. Parliamentarians are elected, in theory, every four years via party lists through a PR system with preference votes. The past cycles have been shorter, due to the collapse of the cabinet.

The *Congreso de los Diputados* is the lower house of the Spanish parliament. Its 350 members are elected through closed party lists from 52 constituencies (PR system in provincial constituencies), every four years or earlier. However, during the period studied by *REPCHANCE Europe*, legislative elections were more frequent: two general elections were held in 2015–2016 and another two in 2019, due to the inability to form a government after the first set of elections.

The *Nationalrat* is the lower house of Switzerland with 200 seats. The number of seats is proportional to the resident population of the cantons, although each canton is guaranteed at least one seat. Each canton is an independent electoral district, and no electoral thresholds are in place. Members of the *Nationalrat* are elected via open party lists (PR system in regional constituencies with preference votes) every four years. In six cantons where there is only one representative, plurality vote is used.

The *House of Commons* is the lower house of parliament of the United Kingdom. Its 650 members are elected using the first-past-the-post (FPTP) electoral system in single-member constituencies. This majoritarian and plurality electoral system is notably different from the aforementioned PR systems. The maximum term length is five years, but due to extensive dissolution rights, general elections often take place earlier, and by-elections frequently happen during legislatures. As in the case of Spain, a succession of relatively short legislatures has happened in the last ten years: 2015–2017, 2017–2019 and 2019–2024.

2.1 MPs of immigrant-origin in five European countries – patterns of underrepresentation

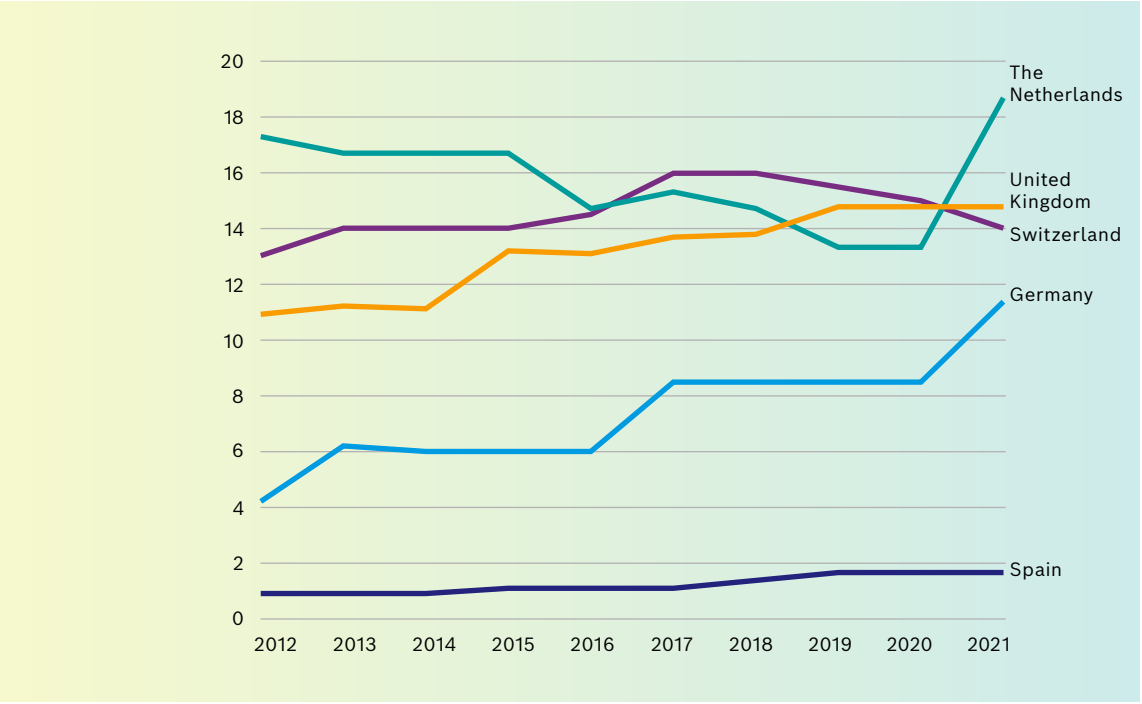
Figure 1 depicts the shares of immigrant-origin (IO) MPs in the respective parliaments for the comparative observation period of the project (2012–2021).[1] There are noticeable differences both between individual countries and over time. First, the level of immigrant-origin MP representation differs significantly across the five countries for both the start and the end of the observation period. In 2012, the immigrant-origin MP shares of the Netherlands, Switzerland and the United Kingdom were in the lower double-digit range (between 10.9 and 17.3 per cent), while Germany (4.2 per cent) and especially Spain (0.9 per cent) lagged far behind.

Due to elections from 2013 to 2021, the shares in the German *Bundestag* have constantly risen and converged towards the levels of the three leading

1 The shares were calculated as follows: the number of IO MPs which held a seat at the end of the respective year was divided by the total number of seats of the parliament in the respective legislative term. For the *Bundestag*, the initial size after the election in September 2021 (736 seats) equals the size at the end of the period of observation (December 31, 2021).

countries. Different to that trend, the parliamentary representation of immigrant-origin MPs in Spain has hardly increased over time and remains on a very low level (less than two per cent of Spanish MPs have foreign ancestry). In Switzerland and the United Kingdom, the increase over time is far less pronounced than in Germany. In the Netherlands, we observe a modest decrease in immigrant-origin parliamentary representation in the 2010s followed by a boost to 18.7 per cent after the 2021 election.

Figure 1: Shares of immigrant-origin MPs in five European national parliaments (2012–2021)[2]



In summary, the representation of immigrant-origin MPs has, on average, slightly increased across the five countries studied, with Germany's *Bundestag* showing the most significant increase over the past decade. At the beginning of the observation period, the immigrant-origin MP share is highest in the Netherlands, while in the Spanish *Congreso de los Diputados*, MPs of immigrant-origin are still the exception rather than the rule. In the following, we will take a closer look at each of the five countries and put the numbers into context. The tables presented list parliamentary parties from left to right.[3]

2 Table A in the appendix includes more detailed information for the most recent election in each country.

3 Most parties could be ordered based on positions documented in the Chapel Hill Expert Survey (https://chesdata.shinyapps.io/Shiny-CHES/), but some smaller parties in the UK and in Spain not included in the CHES data have been positioned by the country teams.

2.1.1 Germany: Bundestag

Table 1 depicts the representation of immigrant-origin MPs in the German *Bundestag* by party after the most recent election in September 2021. With 11 out of 39, the parliamentary group of The Left has the largest share of MPs with a non-German background. Its share of 28.2 per cent is even slightly higher than the immigrant-origin population share (27.2 per cent). On the other hand, the joint parliamentary group of the Christian Democratic parties CDU and CSU has only nine members of immigrant origin (4.6 per cent). Considering all parties, a left-right divide on the level of immigrant-origin MP representation is clearly visible: While the three parties left of the center (The Left, Alliance '90/Greens and the Social Democrats) make up 75 per cent of the immigrant-origin MPs (63 out of 84), the proportion of the parties right of the center (Christian Democrats, Free Democratic Party and Alternative for Germany) is only 23.8 per cent (20 MPs). This difference also holds for previous legislative periods (not shown in the table).

Table 1 The parties are sorted in descending order from 'left' to 'right' (with the exception of "Other", source: Chapel Hill Expert Survey).

Table 1: Representation of immigrant-origin MPs by parties in Germany (2021 election)

Party	IO MP share	IO MPs	Total MPs
Linke (The Left)	28	11	39
B90/Grüne (Alliance '90/Greens)	14	17	118
SPD (Social Democratic Party)	17	35	206
CDU/CSU (Christian Democratic/ Christian Social Union)	5	9	197
FDP (Free Democratic Party)	5	5	92
AfD (Alternative for Germany)	7	6	83
Other (SSW – regional minority party)	100	1	1
Total	**11**	**84**	**736**

2.1.2 The Netherlands: Tweede Kamer

The last general election in the Netherlands within our observation period was held in March 2021. Table 2 shows the 17 parties which won at least one seat ordered from left in the top to right in the bottom. As in Germany, there is a difference between left and right on the level of immigrant-origin MP representation. The (smaller) leftist parties have higher shares of immigrant-origin MPs than the (larger) rightist parties. Contrary to Germany, the parties at the center and on the right have more immigrant-origin MPs

in absolute numbers, which corresponds with their higher number of seats. The center-right Democrats 66 (7 immigrant-origin MPs) and the right People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (6 immigrant-origin MPs) represent almost half of the Dutch immigrant-origin MPs.

Table 2: Representation of immigrant-origin MPs by parties in the Netherlands (2021 election, including substitutions until Dec. 5, 2023)

Party	IO MP share	IO MPs	Total MPs
SP (Socialist Party)	11	1	9
BIJ1	100	1	1
GL (GroenLinks)	33	3	9
PvdD (Party for the Animals)	0	0	6
PvdA (Labour Party)	33	3	9
VOLT	33	1	3
DENK	100	3	3
CU (Christian Union)	20	1	5
50PLUS	0	0	1
D66 (Democrats 66)	27	7	26
CDA (Christian Democratic Appeal)	6	1	18
BBB (Farmer-Citizen Movement)	0	0	1
VVD (People's Party for Freedom and Democracy)	16	6	38
SGP (Reformed Political Party)	0	0	3
JA21 (Correct Answer 21)	0	0	3
PVV (Party for Freedom)	6	1	17
FvD (Forum for Democracy)	0	0	8
Total	**18**	**28**	**160**

Table 2 The parties are sorted in descending order from 'left' to 'right' (with the exception of "Other", source: Chapel Hill Expert Survey).

2.1.3 Spain: Congreso de los Diputados

Table 3: Representation of immigrant-origin MPs by parties in Spain (Nov. 2019 election)

Party	IO MP share	IO MPs	Total MPs
CUP (Popluar Unity Candidacy)	0	0	2
EH BILDU (Basque Country Gather)	0	0	5
Unidas Podemos & allies (United We Can & allies)	4	2	45
Más País (More Country)	0	0	2
BNG (Galician Nationalist Bloc)	0	0	1
ERC (Republican Left of Catalonia)	7	1	14
PSOE (Spanish Socialist Workers' Party)	1	1	149
NC (New Canaries)	0	0	1
PNV (Basque Nationalist Party)	0	0	6
PDECAT (Catalan European Democratic Party)	0	0	6
JXCAT (Together for Catalonia)	0	0	4
Teruel Existe (Teruel Exists)	0	0	1
PRC (Regionalist Party of Cantabria)	0	0	1
CC (Canarian Coalition)	0	0	2
Cs (Citizens – Party of the Citizenry)	0	0	12
UPN (Navarese People's Union)	0	0	2
FORO (Asturias Forum)	0	0	1
PP (People's Party)	1	1	98
VOX (Vox)	2	1	55
Total	**2**	**6**	**407**

Table 3 The parties are sorted in descending order from 'left' to 'right' (with the exception of "Other", source: Chapel Hill Expert Survey).

4 Given the fragmentation of political parties in Spain, we have chosen to group certain parties together on the basis of their ideological similarities, as follows: EH BILDU (Euskal Herria Bildu) also includes ALTERNATIBA; Unidas Podemos & allies includes Barcelona en Comú/Catalunya en Comú/Bloc Nacionalista Valencià/ Iniciativa per Catalunya/Unidas Podemos/PODEMOS/Izquierda Unida/Més Compromís; Más País includes Más Madrid/Equo; ERC (Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya) includes Sobiranistes/Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya – Sobiranistes; PSOE (Partido Socialista Obrero Español) also includes Partit dels Socialistes de Catalunya; PNV (Partido Nacionalista Vasco) also includes Euzko Alderdi Jeltzalea-Partido Nacionalista Vasco.

For the Spanish parliament it is hard to detect any party-specific or ideological pattern of immigrant-origin MP representation as we could identify only a few immigrant-origin MPs for the most recent legislative period across the political spectrum. Table 3 displays 19 parties or party groups[4] which are represented in the *Congreso de los Diputados* after the November 2019 elections, which were the most recent general elections when this

study started (the snap elections of July 2023 were called after the data was collected). The six MPs of known immigrant origin are members of five parties that are located at both ends of the left-right scale, such as the left-leaning Podemos (the only party with two immigrant-origin MPs) and PSOE and the right-leaning People's Party and Vox.

Table 4 The parties are sorted in descending order from 'left' to 'right' (with the exception of "Other", source: Chapel Hill Expert Survey).

2.1.4 Switzerland: Nationalrat

For the most recent legislative period of the Swiss *Nationalrat* we find a distribution of immigrant-origin MPs (Table 4) which resembles the distribution in the German Bundestag. Overall, a majority of the 32 immigrant-origin MPs are members of a left-leaning party. The Social Democrats (15 immigrant-origin MPs) and the Greens (six immigrant-origin MPs) include almost two thirds of all immigrant-origin MPs. By contrast, the larger parties at the political right, such as the Liberals (one immigrant-origin MP) and the Swiss People's Party (two immigrant-origin MPs), include only few immigrant-origin MPs. This tendency of left-wing parties including immigrant-origin MPs among other minorities of power has been observed for earlier periods, too (*Nadler* 2022).

Table 4: Representation of immigrant-origin MPs by parties in Switzerland (2019 election)

Party	IO MP share	IO MPs	Total MPs
EAG (Ensemble à Gauche)	100	1	1
PDA (Swiss Party of Labour)	100	1	1
GPS (Greens)	21	6	28
SPS (Social Democrats)	39	15	39
GLP (Green Liberals)	6	1	16
Mitte (Centre)	11	3	28
EVP (Evangelical People's Party)	67	2	3
FDP (The Liberals)	3	1	29
SVP (Swiss People's Party)	4	2	53
Other	0	0	2
Total	**16**	**32**	**200**

2.1.5 United Kingdom: House of Commons

The picture for the United Kingdom at the time of the 2019 general elections is at first glance (Table 5) different from Germany, the Netherlands and Switzerland. Due to the majoritarian electoral system, most MPs (and 94 per cent of the immigrant-origin MPs) are members of the center-left Labour Party and the right-wing Conservative Party. Within these two parties the immigrant-origin MP share of Labour is more than twice as high (24.2 per cent) as in the Conservatives (10.8 per cent), which is consistent with the picture in the other countries for the same reference period. In addition to these, there is also a significant share of representatives with immigrant backgrounds among the centrist Liberal Democrat representatives, and a few in the center-left SNP. In sum, the average immigrant-origin MP in the *House of Commons* is left-leaning, although the Conservatives also account for a significant share.

Table 5: Representation of immigrant-origin MPs by parties in the United Kingdom (2019 election)

Party	IO MP share	IO MPs	Total MPs
Workers Party of Britain	0	0	1
Sinn Fein	0	0	7
Green Party	0	0	1
Scottish National Party	6	3	49
Plaid	0	0	4
Social Democratic and Labour Party	0	0	2
Labour	24	52	215
Alliance Party of Northern Ireland	0	0	1
Liberal Democrats	20	3	15
Conservatives	11	40	369
Democratic Unionist Party	0	0	8
Other (non-partisan)	0	0	1
Total	**15**	**98**	**673**

Table 5 The parties are sorted in descending order from 'left' to 'right' (with the exc eption of "Other", sources: Chapel Hill Expert Survey and internal additions).

2.2 Party Ideology

The findings in Tables 2 to 5 give an initial impression that there is a relationship between party ideology and the descriptive representation of immigrant-origin MPs. However, as many party systems are now highly fragmented and include very small parties, this way of presentation is not very intuitive. Therefore, Table 6 provides an aggregation of the ideological positioning of all parties across the five parliaments based on five categories: left parties, center-left parties, center parties, center-right parties and right parties. The cross-national presentation confirms that left-wing groups have more immigrant-origin MPs than their right-wing counterparts. When comparing center-left and center-right parties, the share on the center-left is more than twice as high as the one on the center-right, the share among the (far) left compared to the (far) right parties is even higher.

Table 6: Representation of immigrant-origin MPs by party ideology in five European national parliaments

Party ideology	IO MP share	IO MPs	Total MPs
Left	22	45	209
Center-left	15	112	761
Center	14	9	64
Center-right	6	23	371
Right	8	58	767
Other	25	1	4
Total	**11**	**248**	**2,176**

Table 6 Data is based on the following national elections: Germany 2021, The Netherlands 2021, Spain November 2019, Switzerland 2019, United Kingdom 2019.

2.3 Women immigrant-origin MPs – intersectionality affects representation

Not only the immigrant-origin population, but also other socio-demographic groups are known to be underrepresented in politics. The biggest group with a historically low share in parliamentary representation and in leadership positions are women (Inter-Parliamentary Union 2024, 2021). Since immigrant-origin women belong to two underrepresented groups in politics, we take a closer look at this sub-group in the parliaments under investigation.

Immigrant-origin women could face a higher degree of (intersectional) discrimination than the whole immigrant-origin population, but the fact that they belong to two underrepresented groups may also be of some (intersectional) advantage (*Celis* et al. 2015). Female immigrant-origin MPs could specifically benefit from formal and informal quotas in parties. And since quotas for women (mandatory in Spain) are more common in left-wing parties, which also have a higher share of immigrant-origin MPs, the overall effect may also result in a fairer representation of female immigrant-origin MPs compared to female non-immigrant-origin MPs.

In fact, as Table 7 shows, the average proportion of immigrant-origin women is about 13 percentage points higher than the proportion of all women legislators in the five parliaments. In Germany, in the Netherlands, Switzerland and in the UK, the share of women immigrant-origin MPs is significantly higher than the overall share of women MPs. This is contrary to the country with the lowest share of immigrant-origin MPs, Spain, in which women immigrant-origin MPs are more underrepresented than non-immigrant-origin women MPs, but due to the small number of cases, these percentages should be interpreted with caution. In the following, we take a closer look at the individual countries and their respective parliamentary groups.

Table 7: Representation of women (immigrant-origin) MPs in five European national parliaments

Country	Women IO MPs	Women IO MP share	Women MPs	Women MP share	Total MPs
Germany	41	49	257	35	736
The Netherlands	14	50	63	39	160
Spain	2	33	174	43	407
Switzerland	18	56	84	42	200
United Kingdom	48	49	235	35	673
Total	**123**	**50**	**813**	**37**	**2,176**

Table 7 Data is based on the following national elections: Germany 2021, The Netherlands 2021, Spain November 2019, Switzerland 2019, United Kingdom 2019.

In the German *Bundestag*, we find significant left–right differences not only regarding the proportions of immigrant-origin MPs, but also the representation of women (immigrant-origin) MPs (Table 8). The parliamentary groups of the Left and the Greens have women (immigrant-origin) MP shares of more than 50 per cent which is boosted by quota regulations and nomination procedures that require an equal or almost equal share of women

candidates on party lists. The Social Democrats are close to parity. By contrast, women are poorly represented in the parliamentary party groups right of the center. The proportion of female MPs among these parties is no more than a quarter (Free Democrats). The situation is somewhat better for women immigrant-origin MPs in right-leaning parties. In particular, the CDU/CSU parliamentary group appears to fulfill a "dual quota" (44.4 per cent women immigrant-origin MPs vs. 23.4 per cent overall women MPs). Overall, women are more equally represented among immigrant-origin MPs compared to non-immigrant-origin MPs.

Table 8 The parties are sorted in descending order from 'left' to 'right' (with the exception of "Other", source: Chapel Hill Expert Survey).

Table 8: Representation of women (immigrant-origin) MPs by parties in Germany (2021 election)

Party	Women IO MPs	Women IO MP share	Women MPs	Women MP share	Total MPs
Linke (The Left)	7	64	21	54	39
B90/Grüne (Alliance '90/Greens)	11	65	69	59	118
SPD (Social Democratic Party)	17	49	87	42	206
CDU/CSU (Christian Democratic/ Christian Social Union)	4	44	46	23	197
FDP (Free Democratic Party)	1	20	23	25	92
AfD (Alternative for Germany)	1	17	11	13	83
Other (SSW – regional minority party)	0	0	0	0	1
Total	**41**	**49**	**257**	**35**	**736**

The data on women MP representation in the Dutch *Tweede Kamer* after the 2021 election is very similar to the German parliament. First, there is a tendency for the proportion of female MPs to decrease in general if one looks at the parties from 'left' (top) to 'right' (bottom) in Table 9. Second, women immigrant-origin MPs are also more equally represented (50.0 per cent) compared all women MPs (39.4 per cent). Both the absolute numbers and the differences are close to the German figures.

Table 9: Representation of women (immigrant-origin) MPs by parties in the Netherlands (2021 election)

Table 9 The parties are sorted in descending order from 'left' to 'right' (sources: Chapel Hill Expert Survey and internal additions).

Party	Women IO MPs	Women IO MP share	Women MPs	Women MP share	Total MPs
SP (Socialist Party)	0	0	3	33	9
BIJ1	1	100	1	100	1
GL (GroenLinks)	2	67	6	67	9
PvdD (Party for the Animals)	0	0	4	67	6
PvdA (Labour Party)	2	67	5	56	9
VOLT	1	100	2	67	3
DENK	0	0	0	0	3
CU (Christian Union)	0	0	2	40	5
50PLUS	0	0	1	100	1
D66 (Democrats 66)	5	71	12	46	26
CDA (Christian Democratic Appeal)	0	0	7	39	18
BBB (Farmer-Citizen Movement)	0	0	1	100	1
VVD (People's Party for Freedom and Democracy)	3	50	13	34	38
SGP (Reformed Political Party)	0	0	0	0	3
JA21 (Correct Answer 21)	0	0	1	33	3
PVV (Party for Freedom)	0	0	4	24	17
FvD (Forum for Democracy)	0	0	1	13	8
Total	**14**	**50**	**63**	**39**	**160**

The situation in Spain in Table 10 is difficult to interpret due to the low number of immigrant-origin MPs in the *Congreso de los Diputados*. Two out of six immigrant-origin MPs are women, which means the female immigrant-origin MP share is around ten percentage points lower compared to the overall share of women MPs. For the overall share the differences between left and right parties are not as pronounced as in Germany, for example. For the majority of the larger parliamentary party groups (with Vox as an exception), the respective women MP share is close to the mean of 42.8 per cent. With the highest share of elected female MPs among the 5 countries, due to gender quotas, Spain is the only country in the compara-

tive study in which the proportion of women elected among immigrant-origin MPs is lower than the proportion of women among all elected MPs, with a 10 percentage points difference. Despite legally mandated gender quotas, we do not see evidence of an advantage for immigrant-origin women compared to immigrant-origin men, as has been documented for other countries (e. g. Germany and the Netherlands, but also Belgium).

Table 10: Representation of women (immigrant-origin) MPs by parties in Spain (November 2019 election)

Table 10 The parties are sorted in descending order from 'left' to 'right' (sources: Chapel Hill Expert Survey and internal additions).

Party	Women IO MPs	Women IO MP share	Women MPs	Women MP share	Total MPs
CUP (Popluar Unity Candidacy)	0	0	1	50	2
EH BILDU (Basque Country Gather)	0	0	2	40	5
Unidas Podemos & Allies (United We Can & Allies)	0	0	22	49	45
Más País (More Country)	0	0	1	50	2
BNG (Galician Nationalist Bloc)	0	0	0	0	1
ERC (Republican Left of Catalonia)	1	100	7	50	14
PSOE (Spanish Socialist Workers' Party)	0	0	70	47	149
NC (New Canaries)	0	0	0	0	1
PNV (Basque Nationalist Party)	0	0	2	33	6
PDECAT (Catalan European Democratic Party)	0	0	2	33	6
JXCAT (Together for Catalonia)	0	0	3	75	4
Teruel Existe (Teruel Exists)	0	0	0	0	1
PRC (Regionalist Party of Cantabria)	0	0	0	0	1
CC (Canarian Coalition)	0	0	2	100	2
Cs (Citizens – Party of the Citizenry)	0	0	5	42	12
UPN (Navarese People's Union)	0	0	0	0	2
FORO (Asturias Forum)	0	0	0	0	1
PP (People's Party)	1	100	42	43	98
VOX (Vox)	0	0	15	27	55
Total	**2**	**33**	**174**	**43**	**407**

Table 11 shows the women (immigrant-origin) MP shares after the 2019 Swiss *Nationalrat* election. Some patterns are similar to those in Germany and in the Netherlands. First, women are slightly overrepresented in the group of immigrant-origin MPs (56.3 per cent) while they are underrepresented among all MPs (42.0 per cent). Second, among all Swiss MPs the share of women is higher in left parties compared to right parties. In the subgroup of immigrant-origin MPs the differences between left and right are not that pronounced. However, the small N among the right-wing parties requires to be cautious pertaining to further conclusions.

Table 11: Representation of women (immigrant-origin) MPs by parties in Switzerland (2019 election)

Party	Women IO MPs	Women IO MP share	Women MPs	Women MP share	Total MPs
EAG (Ensemble à Gauche)	1	100	1	100	1
PDA (Swiss Party of Labour)	0	0	0	0	1
GPS (Greens)	5	83	17	61	28
SPS (Social Democrats)	8	53	25	64	39
GLP (Green Liberals)	1	100	8	50	16
Mitte (Centre)	0	0	8	29	28
EVP (Evangelical People's Party)	1	50	2	67	3
FDP (The Liberals)	1	100	10	35	29
SVP (Swiss People's Party)	1	50	13	25	53
Other	0	0	0	0	2
Total	**18**	**56**	**84**	**42**	**200**

Table 11 The parties are sorted in descending order from 'left' to 'right' (with the exception of "Other", sources: Chapel Hill Expert Survey and internal additions).

Finally, the British *House of Commons* shows a similar picture to the parliaments in Germany, the Netherlands and Switzerland when it comes to therepresentation of women (immigrant-origin) MPs. The proportions of women MPs displayed in Table 12 correspond to those of the German *Bundestag*: while only a third of all MPs are women, almost half of those of immigrant origin are women. Again, there is a clear left–right divide in the representation of women when comparing the shares of Labour (52.1 per cent of women MPs and 61.5 per cent of women immigrant-origin MPs) and the Conservatives (24.1 per cent and 27.5 per cent, respectively).

Table 12: Representation of women (immigrant-origin) MPs by parties in the United Kingdom (2019 election)

Party	Women IO MPs	Women IO MP share	Women MPs	Women MP share	Total MPs
Workers Party of Britain	0	0	0	0	1
Sinn Fein	0	0	3	43	7
Green Party	0	0	1	100	1
Scottish National Party	2	67	17	35	49
Plaid	0	0	1	25	4
Social Democratic and Labour Party	0	0	1	50	2
Labour	32	62	112	52	215
Alliance Party of Northern Ireland	0	0	0	0	1
Liberal Democrats	3	100	10	67	15
Conservatives	11	28	89	24	369
Democratic Unionist Party	0	0	1	13	8
Other (non-partisan)	0	0	0	0	1
Total	**48**	**49**	**235**	**35**	**673**

Table 12 The parties are sorted in descending order from 'left' to 'right' (with the exception of "Other", sources: Chapel Hill Expert Survey and internal additions).

5 The full list of countries of origin is shown in the appendix (Table B).

6 Successor states of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia are not treated separately since many of the MPs originating from these regions have emigrated before the successor states have formed.

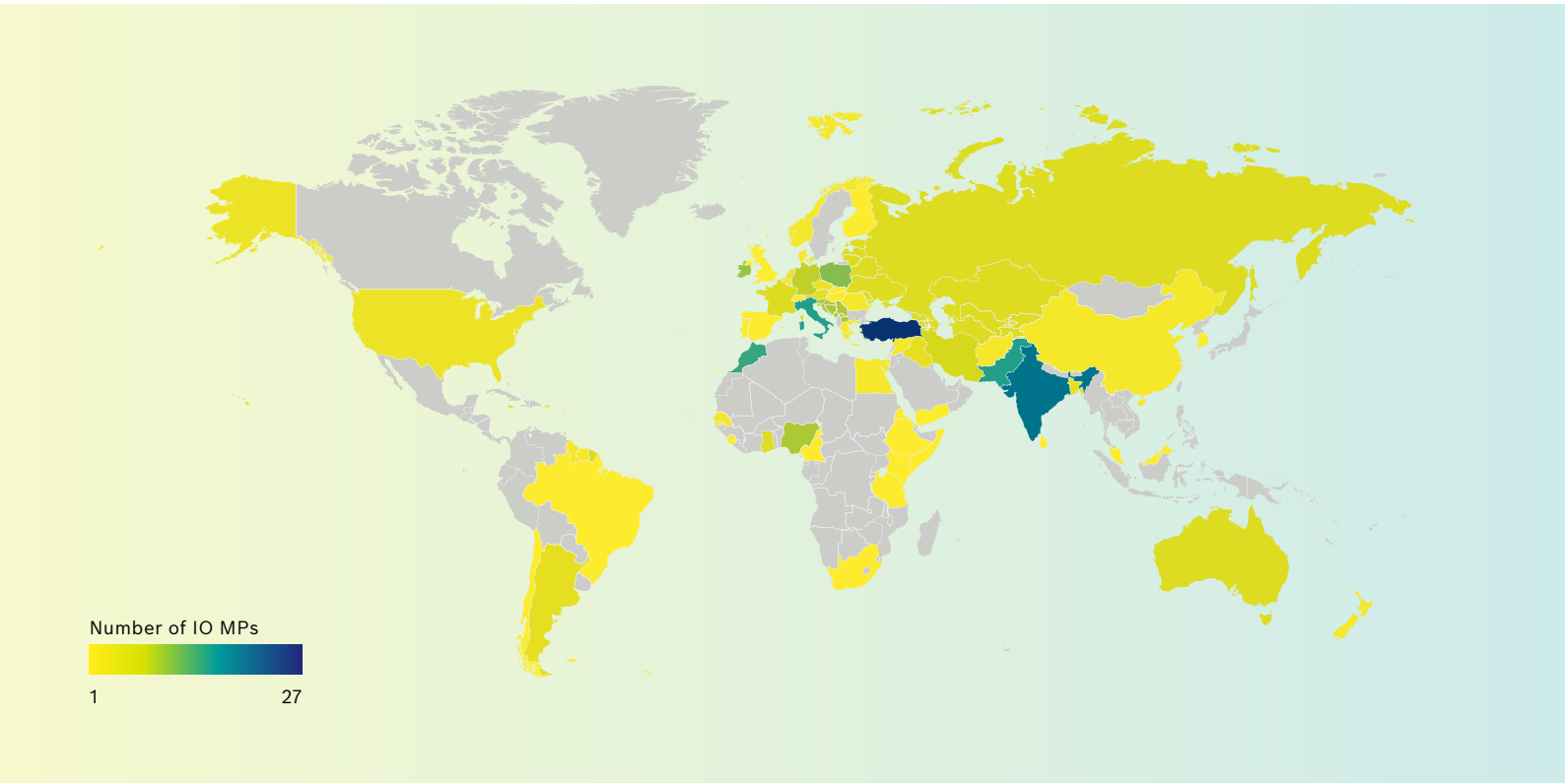
2.4 The Origins of immigrant-origin MPs – country-specific representation

In this section we provide an overview of the ancestry of immigrant-origin MPs, based on either their own former nationality or of their parents. We limit the presentation to sitting MPs of the last legislative term in each national parliament. A world map (Figure 2a) displays the countries of origin of the immigrant-origin MPs in the five parliaments combined.[5] In absolute terms, the largest number of MPs have ancestry in Turkey (27), followed by India (20), Italy and Pakistan (both 15) and Morocco (14).[6] The continents of Europe and Asia are most frequently represented, followed by Africa and South America, and only a few MPs coming from Australia and North America. The different countries are examined below in more detail.

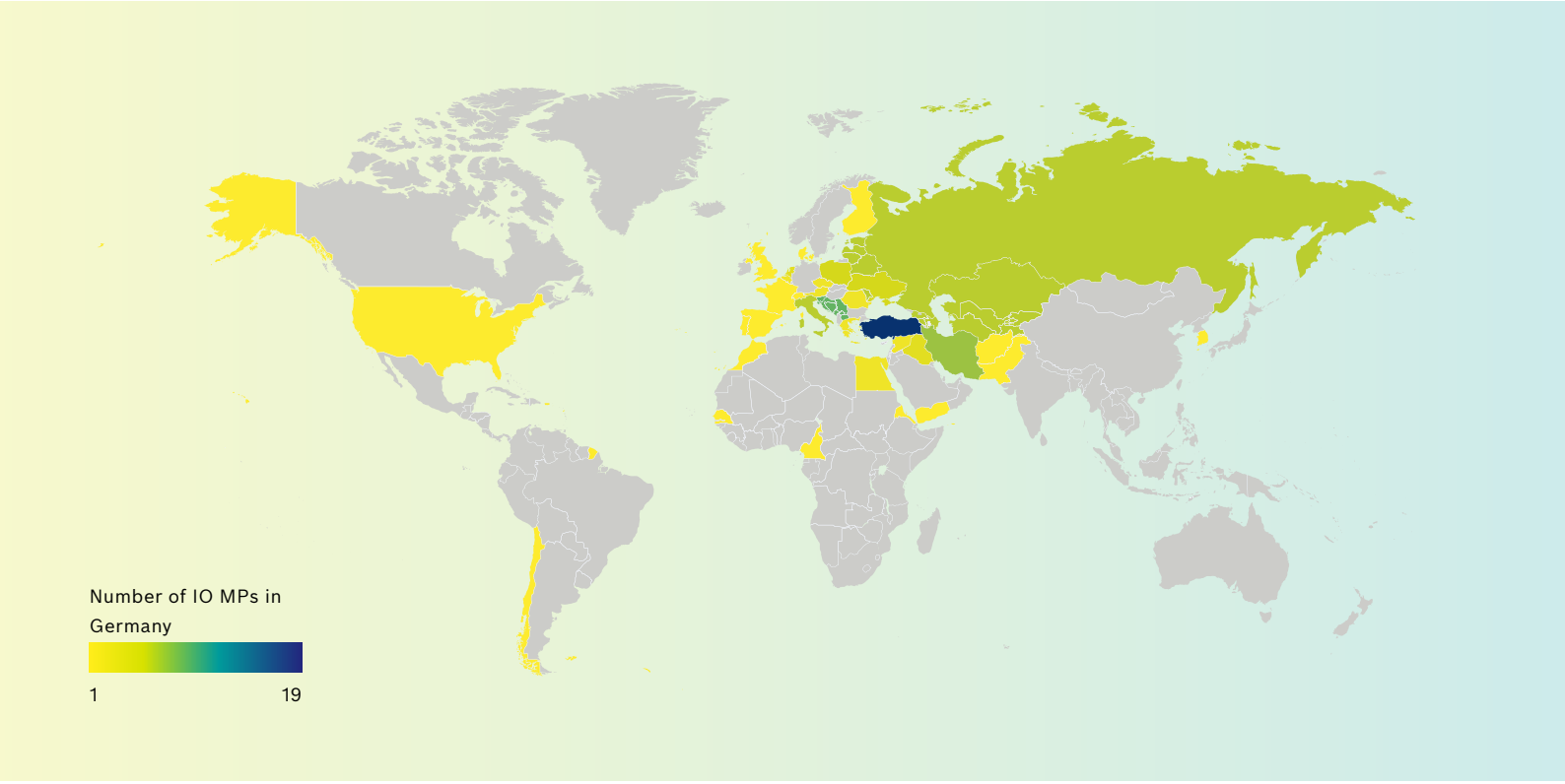
2.4.1 Germany

The top countries of origin of the *Bundestag* immigrant-origin MPs are shown in Table 13. 19 MPs have roots in Turkey, making them the largest group of immigrant-origin MPs in the *Bundestag*, but compared to their share in the population, they remain under-represented. Other prominent countries of origin are (the successor states of the former) Yugoslavia (8 MPs), Iran (6 MPs) and Italy (5 MPs). In these countries and regions, the former West Germany has recruited many workers until the recruitment stop in 1973. Only 5 MPs (0.7 per cent of all MPs) come from the Soviet Union or its successor states, the region where the bulk of immigrants to Germany originate (population share: 4.3 per cent), primarily based on their German ethnicity (*Aussiedler*). Also, the third largest immigrant group, people of Polish descent, is represented by only four MPs. A deficit in descriptive representation is particularly pronounced in these two groups. Only MPs of Iranian origin (0.8 per cent of all MPs) are overrepresented compared to the proportion of the population of Iranian origin (0.3 per cent).[7]

Figure 2: Countries of origin of immigrant-origin MPs in the five countries combined, in Germany (2021 election) and in the Netherlands (2021 election)



7 If, on the other hand, we compare the respective shares to the shares of the immigrant-origin population eligible to vote, the picture is different: MPs of Turkish, Yugoslavian, Iranian and Italian descent are overrepresented in this case, while those of Soviet and Polish descent remain underrepresented.


Number of IO MPs in Germany
1
19

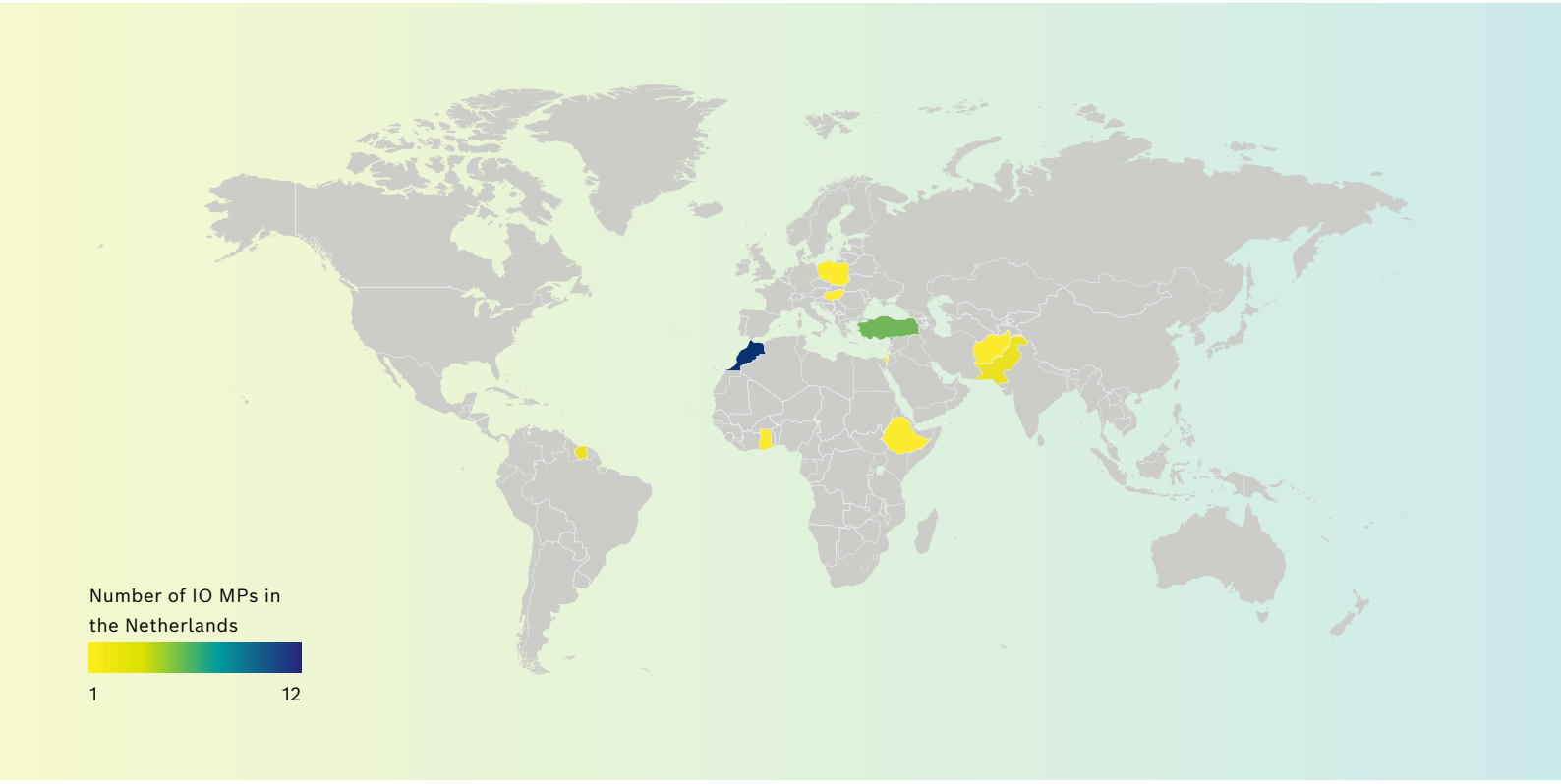

Number of IO MPs in the Netherlands
1
12

Table 13: Top countries of immigrant origin in Germany (2021 election)

Country of origin	IO MPs	Share among IO MPs	Share among all MPs	Population share
Turkey	*19*	*21.8%*	*2.6%*	*3.4%*
Yugoslavia and successor states	8	9.2%	1.1%	2.4%
Iran	6	6.9%	0.8%	0.3%
Italy	5	5.7%	0.7%	1.1%
Soviet Union and successor states	*5*	*5.7%*	*0.7%*	*4.3%*
Poland	*4*	*4.6%*	*0.5%*	*2.7%*

Table 13 Countries in italics are those with the highest population shares (top 3). They are also listed if no or only a few MPs come from these countries.
8 The origin of three MPs could not be identified.

A total of 32 different countries of origin could be determined for the members of the *Bundestag* after the 2021 election.[8] The geographical distribution of their origins is displayed in the world map in Figure 2b. The main countries of origin are in Europe and in the surrounding parts of Asia.

2.4.2 The Netherlands

The countries of origin of Dutch immigrant-origin MPs after the 2021 election are widely spread around the world and predominantly outside of Europe. Only two out of 28 immigrant-origin MPs are of European descent (Hungary and Poland), while half of them (14 MPs) are from Africa. The most common country of origin is Morocco (12 MPs), followed by Turkey (5 MPs), Pakistan and Suriname (2 MPs each). The composition primarily reflects former recruitment of labor and the country's colonial past. MPs of Moroccan and Turkish origin are overrepresented compared to their respective shares in the population. As Table 14 shows, the most common countries of origin (population share) are also represented the most in the *Tweede Kamer*. A total of eleven different countries of origin were identified.

Table 14: Top countries of immigrant origin in the Netherlands (2021 election)

Country of origin	IO MPs	Share among IO MPs	Share among all MPs	Population share
Morocco	*12*	*42.9%*	*7.5%*	*2.3%*
Turkey	*5*	*17.9%*	*3.1%*	*2.3%*
Pakistan	2	7.1%	1.3%	0.2%
Suriname	*2*	*7.1%*	*1.3%*	*2.0%*

Table 14 Countries in italics are those with the highest population shares (top 3).

Table 15 Countries in italics are those with the highest population shares (top 3).

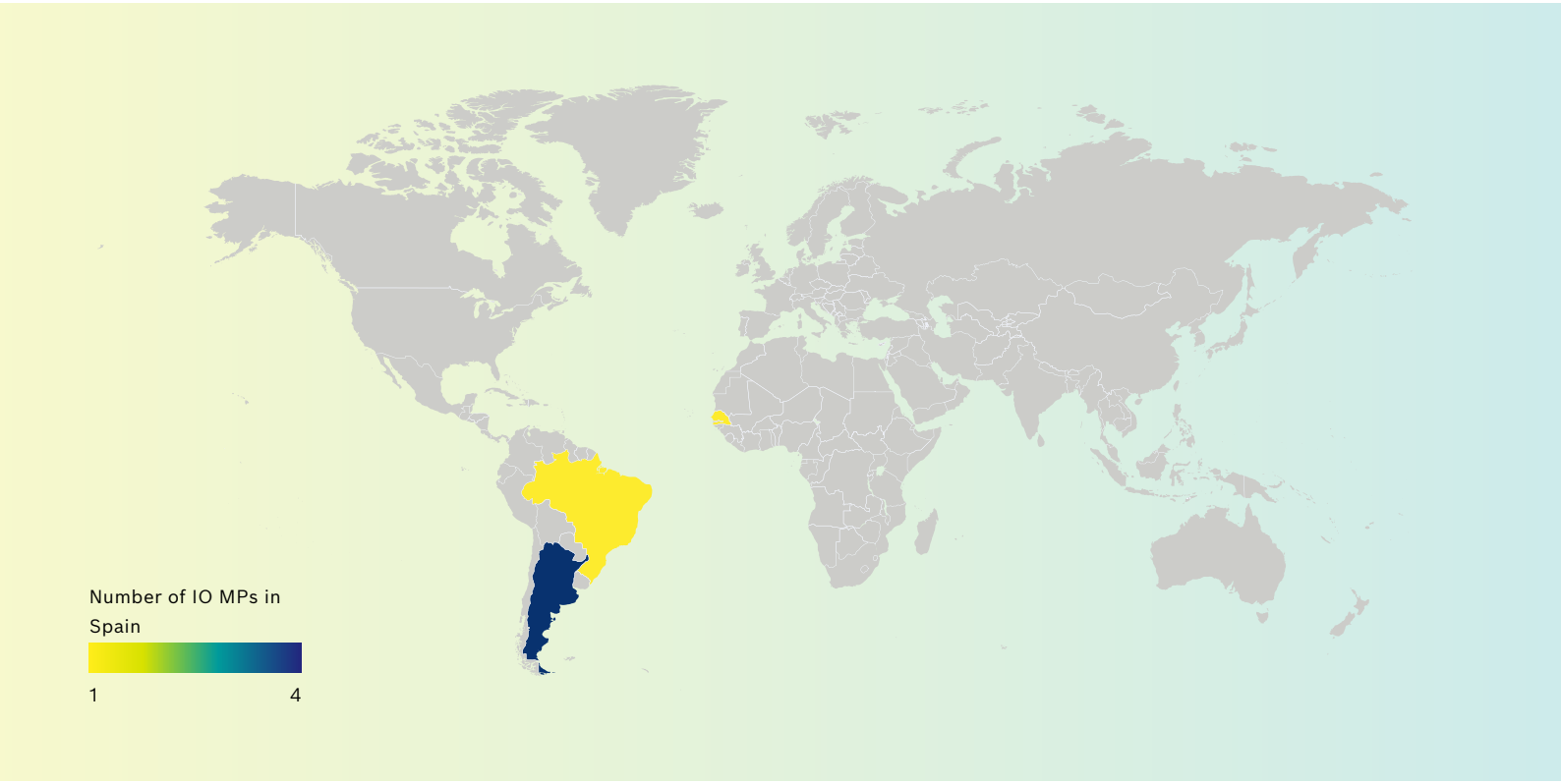
2.4.3 Spain

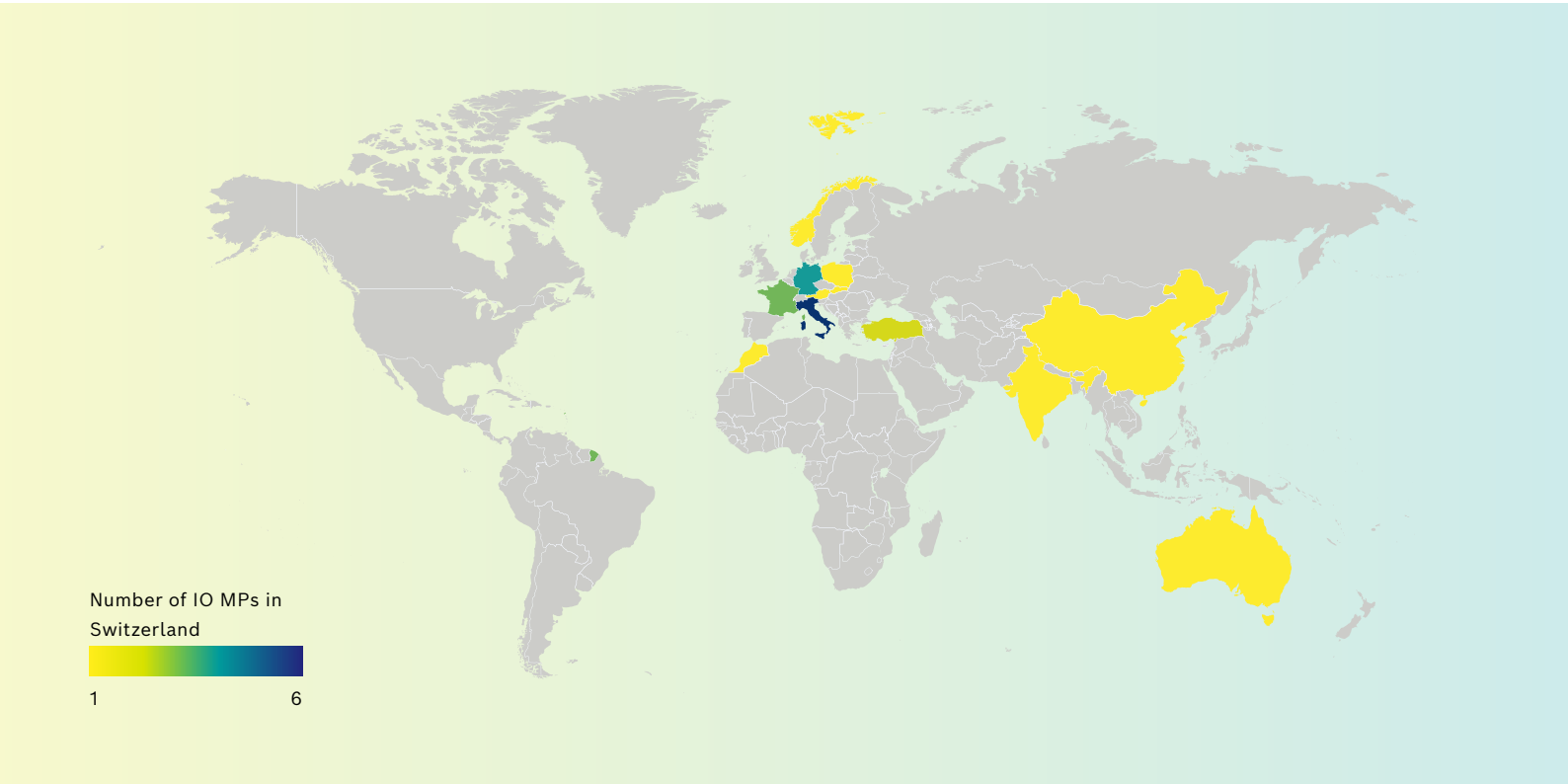
The diversity of countries of origin of Spanish immigrant-origin MPs is, in fact, very low. As displayed in Table 15 and Figure 5, most MPs of immigrant origin seating in the 2019–2023 term have their ancestry in Argentina (4 MPs, 66.7 per cent). Two other MPs are of Brazilian and Senegalese origin. Given its colonial past, the predominant origin of immigrant-origin MPs in Spain from Latin America is not surprising. Although these origin groups seem correctly represented, the findings in fact emphasize the representation deficit of the overall category of Spanish citizens of immigrant origin, given that the largest immigrant population groups (Morocco, Romania and Colombia) are not represented at all in the Spanish parliament.

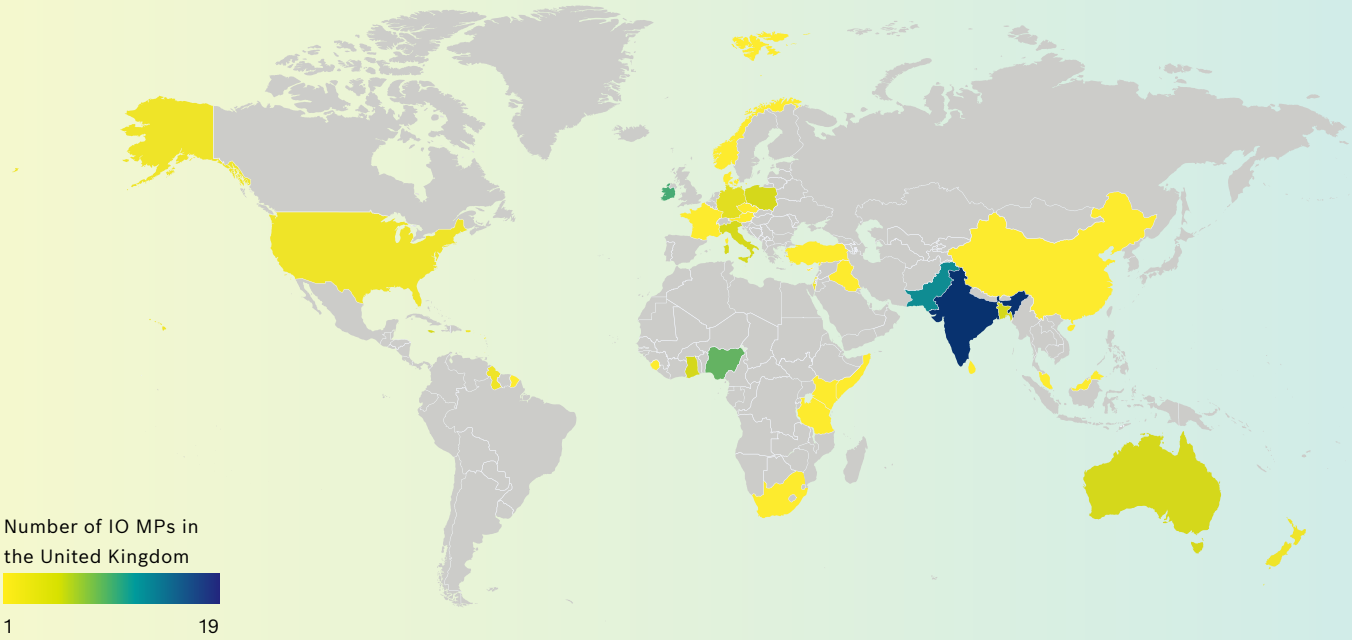
Table 15: Top countries of immigrant origin in Spain (November 2019 election)

Country of origin	IO MPs	Share among IO MPs	Share among all MPs	Population share (foreign-born)
Argentina	4	66.7%	1.0%	0.6%
Brazil	1	16.7%	0.2%	0.3%
Senegal	1	16.7%	0.2%	0.2%
Morocco	*0*			*1.9%*
Romania	*0*			*1.2%*
Colombia	*0*			*0.9%*

Figure 3: Countries of origin of immigrant-origin MPs in Spain (11/2019 election), in Switzerland (2019 election) and in the United Kingdom (2019 election)







2.4.4 Switzerland

As can be seen in Table 16 and Figure 6, the majority of MPs with a migration history in Switzerland come from neighboring countries, in particular from Italy (6 MPs), Germany (4 MPs) and France (3 MPs). Along with Portugal, these three countries also make up the highest share of migrant population groups in Switzerland. Unlike in the German *Bundestag*, there are no *Nationalrat* MPs who come from former Yugoslavia or the Soviet republics. Origins from predominantly Muslim countries are also rare. Two MPs come from Turkey and one MP is of Moroccan descent. The total of 32 immigrant-origin MPs comprises twelve different countries.

Table 16: Top countries of immigrant-origin in Switzerland (2019 election)

Country of origin	IO MPs	Share among IO MPs	Share among all MPs	Population share
Italy	*6*	*26.1%*	*3.0%*	*3.1%*
Germany	*4*	*17.4%*	*2.0%*	*4.2%*
France	3	13.0%	1.5%	2.0%
Turkey	2	8.7%	1.0%	0.9%
Portugal	*0*			*2.5%*

Table 16 Countries in italics are those with the highest population shares (top 3).

2.4.5 United Kingdom

The countries of origin of the 98 British immigrant-origin MPs after the 2019 elections are very diverse, as displayed in the world map in Figure 3c. There are a total of 33 different countries of origin from all continents. However, there is a clear concentration of South Asian backgrounds, with almost a third having family ancestry in India (19 MPs) and Pakistan (12 MPs). The top countries of origin are listed in Table 17. Contrary to Germany or Spain, the main country origins of elected MPs roughly correspond to the main foreign national origins of British citizens (India, Pakistan and Poland). Many of them are Commonwealth countries whose citizens have the right to vote and stand for British elections whether their stay in the UK is indefinite, time-limited or conditional. We can even observe that the share of MPs in 2019 for the top four countries of origin is slightly higher in the *House of Commons* compared to their respective population shares of foreign nationals in the UK. The comparison would be less favorable if we took into account not just foreign nationals but also those who have naturalized as British citizens.

Table 17: Top countries of immigrant-origin in the United Kingdom (2019 election)

Table 17 Countries in italics are those with the highest population shares (top 3).

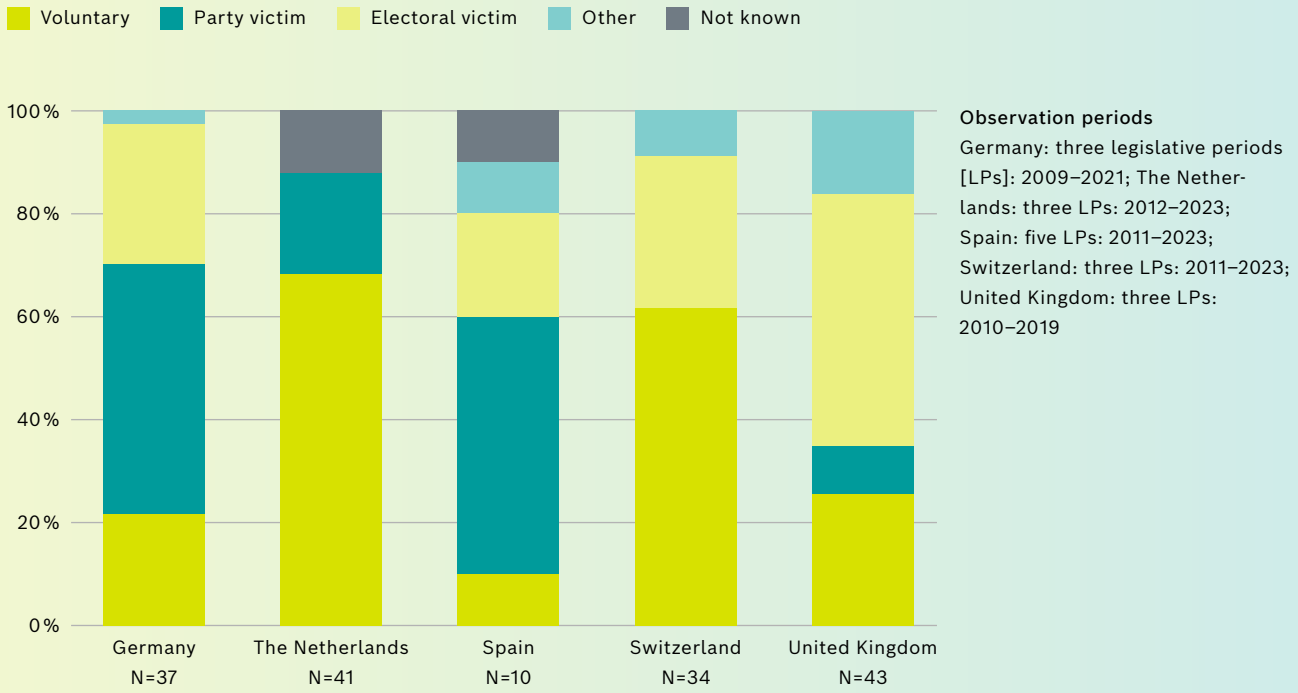
Country of origin	IO MPs	Share among IO MPs	Share among all MPs	Population share (foreign-born)
India	*19*	*14.8%*	*2.8%*	*1.3%*
Pakistan	*12*	*9.4%*	*1.8%*	*0.8%*
Ireland	9	7.0%	1.3%	0.5%
Nigeria	8	6.3%	1.2%	0.3%
Poland	*4*	*3.1%*	*0.6%*	*1.2%*

2.5 How Careers of immigrant-origin MPs End

In the last section of this quantitative overview, we focus on immigrant-origin MPs whose career in parliament has ended within approximately the last decade. The rationales of this rather explorative analysis are whether the parties play a dominant role for the end of the career of immigrant-origin MPs, and whether we are able to detect specific patterns across countries. A typology introduced by Vanlangenakker et al. (2013) lists three main reasons for leaving parliament: Voluntary exit, having been a party victim or an electoral victim. First, *voluntary exits* include MPs resigning (1) for another position/mandate in politics (primarily a career jump), (2) for a new non-political job or (3) for personal reasons (retirement, own term limit). The second category, *party victim*, includes MPs (1) not being nominated again, (2) nominated at a worse list place compared to the preceding election (preventing re-election), (3) leaving due to rather formal reasons like facing a term limit or (4) not being nominated again due to intra-party competition or conflict. Third, *electoral victims* are MPs who have not been reelected while not being a party victim (second category). This may be, for example, due to a poor party result in a list PR electoral system.

Figure 4 shows the drop-out reasons by country for approximately one decade each. In most cases, reasons could be assigned to the aforementioned three categories – for some cases however, the reason remained unclear ("other") or some information was missing ("not known"). Obviously, there is significant variation across countries. Roughly half of the parliamentary careers of immigrant-origin MPs in Germany and Spain ended due to party-related reasons. By contrast, in the UK, about half of the immigrant-origin MPs figures as electoral victims and only about one in ten becomes a party victim. In the Netherlands and Switzerland, on the other hand, mostly voluntary reasons (around 60 per cent each) were identified for early career endings of immigrant-origin MPs.

Figure 4: Drop-out reasons of immigrant-origin MPs in five European national parliaments



Turning back to the German numbers, a significant proportion of MPs (27 per cent) left the *Bundestag* due to a poor party result. The FDP failed to reach the electoral threshold of five per cent in the 2013 election and as a result, four immigrant-origin MPs lost their seats. In addition, there were several cases in which immigrant-origin MPs were given the same (or even improved) list position compared to the previous election, but this was not sufficient for re-entry due to a poor party result. In only two cases, immigrant-origin MPs left the *Bundestag* to pursue a career at a different political level: Katarina Barley became a member and vice-president of the European Parliament in 2019 and Danyal Bayaz became Minister of Finance in the state of Baden-Württemberg in 2021. The remaining voluntary exits include mostly resignations for personal reasons (e. g. age). Overall, the multi-faceted category of party victims represents most of the German drop-outs (49 per cent).

For Dutch immigrant-origin MPs who left the *Tweede Kamer* the picture is very different from that of the German case. Most of the immigrant-origin MPs seem to have left parliament voluntarily (68 per cent) in the three legislative periods observed. Only about one fifth of the immigrant-origin MPs

have been identified as a "party victim", and no electoral victims could be identified. Because of internal party politics, the distinction between MPs who do not seek re-election voluntarily and those who are not satisfied with their designated list place and therefore decide not to run again, is not always clear-cut. In most parties, the list is first proposed to those who want to be on it, and they can accept or decline the pre-assigned place. Then the list is put to the party members. More qualitative work is needed to sort out several cases.

Findings for Spain also need to be treated with reservation, as only ten immigrant-origin MPs left parliament between 2011 and 2023. Half of them (5 MPs) have been classified as party victims, two as electoral victims and one member left the *Congreso de los Diputados* voluntarily. Party victims in Spain tend to be more senior MPs, as indicated by the average of terms served (4.8 terms), compared to those who left the chamber as a result of electoral defeat (1.5 terms). Conflicts with the party may also be contextual, and changes in party leadership might facilitate (or hinder) the return of certain MPs. This is the case of Cayetana Álvarez de Toledo, who left the *Congreso de los Diputados* after a public disagreement with the then-party leader and Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy. She returned in 2019, after which she served as the party spokesperson under Pablo Casado and Alberto Núñez Feijóo leaderships. The MP who left for personal reasons was only very briefly a national MP, replacing the previous MP for just one month.

The vast majority (62 per cent) of Swiss immigrant-origin MPs who left the *Nationalrat* in the last decade did so for voluntary reasons. These are the publicly available reasons, and as in the Netherlands there may be different underlying causes. In Switzerland, however, incumbency advantages tend to be strong, so parties have incentives to keep elected representatives on the ballot. On the other hand, the consensual style of politics in Switzerland tends to tone down internal party disputes, and candidates who might be party victims will choose to retire voluntarily. In this sense, party victims are difficult to identify in Switzerland. By contrast, election-related drop-outs cannot be avoided in a list-based proportional representation system, and a substantial share of Swiss drop-outs is election-related (29 per cent).

In the UK, the highest proportion of electoral victims can be found. Around half of the British immigrant-origin MPs (49 per cent) had to leave the *House of Commons* due to defeat in elections. About a quarter (26 per cent) left for voluntary reasons and only a few MPs (nine per cent) are party victims. The category "other", which concerns 2 out of 10 MPs, consists of MPs who either passed away during the legislature – hence could not stand for election anymore – or were involved in public scandals of all kinds:

financial crimes, sex crimes, public statements liable to legal sanctions, etc. Some MPs were suspended by their political parties and could not run for election until the procedure was completed, even facing recall petitions, while others resigned and quit politics altogether. As in other countries, oftentimes, party conflict reasons for departures are dressed up as voluntary departures. The high percentage of MPs leaving due to electoral defeat is consistent with the electoral volatility of the period studied.

To sum up, electoral victims can disproportionally often be found in the UK, while this seems an irrelevant reason for the drop-out of immigrant-origin MPs in the Netherlands. Victims of the party, primarily pertaining to re-nomination, are more frequent in Germany and in Spain compared to the other countries analyzed, and voluntary exit is the most frequent pattern in Switzerland and the Netherlands. However, especially the Dutch cases indicate that some of these officially called voluntary withdrawals might in fact be induced by a lack of party support. Similarly, in Switzerland, some renouncements may be the result of tensions between the immigrant-origin MP and the party. Deeper analyses are needed to learn more about the probable "black box" behind withdrawals of sitting MPs (*Bergmann* and *Wüst* 2025), not only for those of immigrant origin.

3. THE VIEW OF POLITICIANS OF IMMIGRANT ORIGIN

The qualitative component of REPCHANCE Europe identifies factors facilitating the entry and long-term success of immigrant-origin politicians. In this part, the main results of semi-structured interviews with immigrant-origin politicians in all five countries are summarized. We focus on common patterns across all countries, but document also particularly important findings in single countries. The overarching objective of the interviews was to gain insight into the career trajectories and, most crucially, the pivotal moments, steps and opportunities that contributed to the interviewees' success. The interview material is addressed by examining the typical stages of a conventional political career.

3.1 Path into politics

3.1.1 Important Factors

A politicized family and early political socialization are very strong contributing factors for entering politics in an abundance of cases. In all countries, a significant portion of interviewees indicate that the origins of their interest in politics, including active involvement, were established at an early age. The parental dining table represents a pivotal setting for the early formation of political socialization. Some of the interviewees indicate that they engaged in discussions about politics with their parents and that their parents' home was generally characterized by informed and interested discourse.

"I come from a very political family. I am the first to be a member of a democratic party, but for as long as I can remember, discussions about the news and current political events have always played a role at our kitchen table. If you learn to debate early on, it sharpens your own arguments." (GER 1)

In Switzerland and the Netherlands, proximity to labor parties and the working class was also emphasized. This indicates that parental proximity to a working-class context plays a role in the intergenerational transmission of political interest and opinion formation. Furthermore, family migration for political reasons or as political refugees was also identified as a factor conducive to the later political engagement of their offspring by interviewees in Switzerland and the Netherlands.

Similar effects can be discerned in Germany, Spain and the UK – but not as dominant as in the two other countries. A close affiliation with left-wing and labor-oriented parties can be found often among those politicians. If there has been a precedent of political engagement within the family

history, this is more likely to guarantee that the descendants will also be politically active. What is particularly noteworthy, however, is that a considerable number of the first generation become politically active in Germany based on their direct and personal experience in their country of origin. Many of them were already politically active in their country of origin or had to flee because of their political affiliations.

It can be argued that an individual's origin is a crucial aspect of political involvement later on, intertwined with socialization and class-related concerns. However, within the context of specific countries, there are subtle nuances and variations.

3.1.2 Motivation

A significant motivating factor is the issue of social justice which is closely related to migration and integration experiences. In most countries, political commitment is predominantly linked to experiences of inequality and discrimination.

The experiences of discrimination vary considerably, from everyday instances to structural discrimination. On the one hand, the experiences in question are personal; on the other, they may also relate to injustice perpetrated against individuals or minority groups in general. The majority of immigrant-origin politicians indicated that these experiences motivated them to seek change and – most importantly – to have a voice in the matter. In Switzerland, politics is considered as an activity that is complementary to a professional career, as a kind of 'additional tool to advance their cause'.

Interestingly, the UK and Spain are deviant cases. In these countries, the motivating factors are rather vague and widely dispersed. However, factors also include historical moments that were of a motivating nature. This is a common feature also in Germany and the Netherlands. Interviewees in these countries named specific moments in history and politics that they found motivating.

In Germany, respondents name right-wing extremist acts of violence, in particular the attacks in Solingen 1993 and Hanau 2020, as "wake-up calls". A significant number of respondents have articulated a general concern pertaining to democracy and human rights, as well as the rise of right-wing radical parties, as a motivating factor for their political involvement.

In the UK, the anti-apartheid mobilizations in the mid- to late-1980s and the liberation of Nelson Mandela in 1990 were mentioned by – mostly Black –

politicians. In Spain, the emergence of Podemos in 2014 around the "Indignados" and "15M" movement after the financial crisis triggered a similar mobilizing effect.

Additionally, two pivotal occurrences are highlighted in the Netherlands. In the aftermath of 9/11, awareness of the state of the world and the fragility of peace has grown significantly. This has raised the desire to play a more active role in shaping decisions and opinions. In addition, Muslim respondents indicate that they experienced the burden of prejudice, stereotypes, and increased discrimination.

"9/11 was really a kind of turning point where Islam suddenly became part of my identity, while previously I was [redacted] and the religious identity really came after 9/11 with really, really bizarre experiences. Including people who knew me for hundreds of years and who I sat in bars with who asked me, [...] do you actually drink alcohol? Mass psychology. It's so scary." (NL 28)

The second political event in the Dutch context was the assassination of the anti-immigrant politician Pim Fortuyn in 2002. Generally, the respondents indicated a pervasive sentiment of unease regarding the country's future, which served as a catalyst for their own proactive engagement.

3.1.3 Mobilization

Networks and contacts in the sphere of politics are prerequisites for becoming politically active. Especially when it comes to the decisive step of joining a party or running for office, the direct approach and targeted mobilization of people of immigrant origin play central roles. In the Netherlands and the UK, one can even speak of a more systematic "scouting system", which is already an indication of the potential institutionalization of support measures. In the Netherlands, parties, and left-wing parties in particular, actively recruit potential candidates or party members to have a positive external impact and specifically target people who are themselves well-connected. In the UK, recruitment can be found across all parties. In the Conservative Party, however, it was a particularly active practice under the leadership of David Cameron. In Spain, this form of direct approach is the main "type of track" into office.

"We had an amazing Mayor at that time [...]. Basically, she asked me, she showed up on our door one day, knocked on our door and said 'would you stand?'. It would never have crossed my mind to do so. She asked both of us. We were 25, 26. 'You guys are active, we want young people to stand'. This idea of just asking people. 'If you do this, we will support

you and explain how things work'. So that's how, I mean, I wish it was more dramatic. Then I did." (UK 12)

This targeted placement of diversity – here in the form of people with a history of migration – is a motive that can be found in all countries. Patterns of diversification of party lists often go along with tokenism, defined as the targeted and performative placement of diversity. Such practices indicate that diversity and the inclusion of candidates of immigrant origin are often rather performative. And parties play ambiguous roles: on the one hand, they have the power to facilitate a higher share of minority politicians, on the other hand, they may restrict (true) diversification beyond the sheer number of representatives.

Especially in the German, but also in the Swiss context, parties, situations, and people close to parties are essential for a kind of "domino effect" that leads to political involvement. The bulk of interviewees had already lived or worked in contexts close to politics before they engaged in a party. Their political involvement was triggered by an event, by activity in an association and/or by individual people or groups who approached them directly. In Switzerland, political involvement had frequently not been intended in the first place, but then considered a necessary step to have an impact on society.

More often than in other countries, society and migrant organizations are mentioned as central in the Netherlands. It is here where networks are formed and some kind of "scouting" takes place.

3.2 Aspiration and nomination

3.2.1 Structural support

The trajectory of each career is embedded in contexts. When it comes to formalized structural support, the pattern in the UK and Spain is similar to the other countries. There are no official and formalized structures of support, but rather informal mechanisms. For example, the UK Labour Party has informal "all ethnic minority shortlist" mechanisms in a significant number of parliamentary constituencies.

The political level on which politicians are active can additionally make a difference in federal countries like Germany and Switzerland. At the local level, the proximity to the electorate is particularly important. It is crucial to be perceived as an accessible and relatable individual, someone who is

regarded as a member of the community, trusted and supported by the electorate. At the local political level in Germany and Switzerland, particularly engagement in civil society is beneficial. It also matters to address specific groups and to be recognizable. However, in Germany, Switzerland, and the Netherlands, the ethnic community is a supportive element. In the Netherlands, as previously mentioned, the popularity among the immigrant-origin population is of particular relevance for decisions on where candidates are placed on party lists.

Several interviewees in Germany highlighted the empowering effect of community support, with some MPs expressing the need for such assistance. In Switzerland, there are some ethnic groups that are highly interested in politics and others that do not tend to get involved at all. Moreover, belonging to a group does not automatically guarantee support of one's own group. In fact, the politician may be subject to even greater scrutiny. Politics is a challenging field, as interviewees in all countries agree on. Additionally, individuals of immigrant origin frequently report discrimination and adverse circumstances, so individuals and groups with shared experiences offer substantial support.

It is also important to acknowledge the ambivalence inherent to the issue of ethnicity. In all studied cases, conflicts are reported. The interviewees navigate through a landscape of tension, where their experiences and identities are shaped by the expectations and norms of multiple social groups. Some interviewees were reluctant to discuss their migration history or expressed a lack of sense of belonging. In these cases, conflicts of loyalty may emerge, and the migration narrative can be a double-edged sword, offering support from a community while simultaneously limiting their engagement in and for that group.

3.2.2 Personal Support

At the level of personal support, various actors can be identified who have played a beneficial role for immigrant-origin politicians. While there is variation by country, the relevance of networks is undisputed. A significant portion of interviewees from all countries emphasize the importance of contacts and group affiliations. In Switzerland, women's organizations, trade unions (left-wing) and trade associations (especially right-wing) are particularly important. Networks also extend beyond those within the own party (which are often given the greatest importance), encompassing a broader spectrum of connections across various social spheres.

In Germany and Switzerland, the environment both on a personal and on a broader social level are referenced. This means friends, family, neighbors

and other individuals who provide support. Nevertheless, it is predominantly a form of psychological assistance that serves to offset pressure associated with the political career, thereby also providing support through advice. In all countries, the importance of networking in the political sphere is emphasized for receiving support during the political career. This means encouragement and a rather direct approach, particularly during the initial phase. Interviewees in Germany, the Netherlands, and Switzerland emphasize the importance of mentors who provide guidance and advice throughout their career.

"So one day I was at a meeting of [political party] where [sitting MP] was speaking. And he gave a wonderful speech. I was very inspired by him and I went up to him. And then he said to me: 'Would you like to join a brainstorming group about the multicultural society at [political party]?'" (NL 17)

With respect to mentoring, differences by country should be noted. In the German context, formalized mentoring programs appear to have a lesser impact than informal mentoring, which arises through social interaction. In the Netherlands and Germany, most mentors are older and male, which reflects the distribution of political power in the respective countries. In the Netherlands, interviewees observed that this concentration of power is both a deterrent factor and motivation for immigrant-origin politicians. On the one hand, they don't feel represented and see the unjust distribution of power, but on the other hand, they are motivated to gain influence and power themselves. They want to succeed and, at some point, to occupy a position where they can act as mentors themselves. A willingness to support young talent is also evident in the German context. Not only do a significant portion of the interviewees report having been mentored, but they are also serving as mentors to others.

3.2.3 Conditions

Especially in Germany and Switzerland, immigrant-origin politicians often appear to be tokens, and diversity in parties and parliaments is, to a certain degree, performative. For example, German immigrant-origin politicians serve shorter tenures in parliament than non-immigrant-origin MPs, and while they report that migration issues are deliberately assigned to them, they also report restrictions in demonstrating expertise beyond migration-related issues.

Immigrant-origin politicians in Switzerland find it challenging to identify with the role of a "real Swiss politician," particularly when they focus on migration-related issues. They are frequently referred to as "naturalized"

which let them appear as second-class citizens. Such a form of othering and discrimination makes it harder to wholeheartedly identify with the country, even if their political activities are hardly distinguishable from the ones of politicians of Swiss ancestry.

"Naturalized people, [they are considered that] they'll never be anything but naturalized somewhere. They're not really Swiss." (CH 5)

Similarly, German politicians of immigrant origin point to the necessity of identifying with their country of heritage, but they have also highlighted the difficulties they face when confronted with exclusionary attributions and othering. Some immigrant-origin politicians adopt these attributions and address their migration history, even incorporating it into their political program. Others, however, reject such links and seek to distinguish themselves from issues related to migration.

3.2.4 Types of tracks

It is within such tensions that our interviewees navigate through the political arena. There is emphasis on the notions of "hard work" and success having to be "earned". The group under examination very often has working-class backgrounds and many experienced intergenerational social mobility.

In the Netherlands and Germany, two types of tracks can be identified. One of the already mentioned pathways is particularly illustrative of the sentiment "earning one's stripes" (also applying to Switzerland). Most politicians have been engaged with the party for an extended period, undergoing various roles and stages until they "reach" their first candidacy. In the German case, party-political activities in advisory bodies (migration and integration councils) are complementary factors for a nomination. A less frequently used track consists of individuals who enter politics laterally with external social capital, like working in migrant organizations.

In Switzerland, career tracks are even more closely associated with the political parties and their objectives. One potential type of track is that left-wing parties seek to emphasize their political program through the targeted recruitment of various group members: women, immigrants, people with working-class backgrounds. In right-wing parties, selected immigrants are less visible or only partially recognizable by migrant-specific characteristics, like an accent. Another potential type of track in Switzerland can be found across the different parties and is the general recruitment of individuals with a history of migration, pursued with the objective of appearing more diverse, without any intention of providing long-term support to those individuals. This observation reflects quantitative results for Germany, where immigrant-

origin politicians leave the national parliament earlier than their colleagues who are not of immigrant origin. A final track in Switzerland involves individuals who enter politics late in their professional careers from a specific context and for strategic reasons.

3.3 Campaigning and electoral success

3.3.1 Conditions for getting elected

When our interviewees were asked to name the main factors of their election, list positions or winnable seats (especially in the UK) are referred to in almost all interviews. Access to office is primarily decided in the nomination phase when the position on a party list is decided on or the constituency candidates are selected. Many interviewees consistently reported on the battles for promising list positions and the factors influencing them. As already mentioned, the party plays the most important role as gatekeeper. Personal contacts with decision-makers and networks within the party are important and improve the chances of a better placement.

In the Netherlands, reference is made to the composition of selection committees, which are predominantly male and white. The composition of the selectorate illuminates the consequences of an inadequate representation of significant social groups.

In Switzerland, the size of the city plays an additional role. Ethnic diversity is promoted more in large cities, and lists are therefore more diverse.

"If you have a different skin color, if you have obvious migration characteristics, and you have an accent or perhaps don't speak German or another national language flawlessly, that it is then much more difficult." (CH 1)

In an election, the issue of visibility seems to be of particular importance. In Switzerland, interviewees often note that it is more difficult for politicians of immigrant origin to be elected if they have a different skin color or do not speak one of the local dialects. Consequently, proximity to the electorate can be both, a structural advantage or disadvantage. In Germany, a comparable pattern can be found on the local level: "rootedness" in the locality is an important factor and thus makes it particularly difficult for those perceived as being foreign to succeed.

3.3.2 Role of the immigrant ancestry

The impact of being of immigrant origin can be observed in all countries studied, with differing perceptions and manifestations. The history of migration plays an ambivalent role in the lives and careers of individuals. As with the parties, it has an enabling effect in some contexts, but a discriminatory one in others. Particularly in the Netherlands, Switzerland, and Germany, interviewees indicate that their diverse backgrounds are used to appeal to a diverse electorate. The practice of tokenism seems to be a common electoral strategy. And winnable seats are more often reserved for non immigrant-origin candidates as the following quote illustrates.

"When the fight for seats gets tough, when the air gets thinner, migrants are the first to be sacrificed. (...) [T]hey put migrants up everywhere in [constituencies] where they knew they had zero chance of getting into parliament. [...] That means that they were supposedly given places on the list that were hopeless. [...] I do have the impression that the parties are now not promoting people with a migration background in a targeted manner, but rather those who have a bad [constituency]. They just let a migrant run there. If he's lucky, he gets in, if he's unlucky or if he's not lucky, he's not in anyway. And that's not enough support." (GER 7)

Interestingly, interviewees in Spain and the UK report that a targeted approach to migrant voters plays little or no role in personal electoral strategies. However, this does not mean targeting ethnic communities is not practiced. Spanish and British interviewees also indicated they are well aware of being classified as "migrants" and therefore pigeonholed into such a role. While a similar awareness is evident in other countries, immigrant-origin politicians often also point to the necessity of developing a profile beyond migration issues for success in the long run. The continued prevalence of discriminatory practices and exclusionary structures is part of the ambivalence surrounding immigrant-origin politicians. Our interviewees frequently find themselves in rather contradictory contexts and circumstances. While their presence is welcome and supported, they are often still regarded as "outsiders" and experience racism.

3.4 Programs, availability, and use

Programs enhancing the political representation of immigrant-origin citizens are either absent or perceived as not having had a significant impact on political careers. Especially older politicians of immigrant origin say that they were not aware of any such programs in the early phase of their po-

litical careers. Nevertheless, there are nuances in the perceived relevance of support programs. These can roughly be categorized into two groups: general support and networking. In Germany, there is a comparatively extensive array of programs, supported by a variety of institutions, both outside and inside the political sphere. A comparable dichotomy can be observed in the Netherlands, where external programs are being increasingly discontinued due to funding constraints. Nevertheless, there are traditional "kader" training programs within political parties for those seeking to enter the political sphere. These are designed to equip individuals with the skills and knowledge required to operate effectively in politics. It is noteworthy that there is no mention of any form of preparation in Spain, and the narrative of "being on one's own" is also prevalent in the UK.

"It was shock therapy, and it was terrifying. No one had explained to me how to behave in front of a camera, no one had told me how to give a press conference. It's true that in social media we worked very closely with the press people, and we worked a lot with the spokespersons, so I knew what a 'canutazo' was, what a duplex was and that in a duplex you have to look at the camera and things like that, but no one had explained it to me. And, in addition, they threw us into an electoral campaign directly, which is not like you give a press conference every now and then. No, it's that you have 15 days of appearing in the media every day, and I remember it as something tremendously terrifying and especially the electoral debates. It's true that later on, on TV, etc., you were accompanied by a press person, but what happened to me is that the press person who accompanied me, who later continued to be my press chief until I left, was also new, he was a person my age who had never worked, he had been an editor in some media, but he had never worked as a press officer for an electoral campaign, so he was just as lost as I was. It's true that he was a support because, well, he was a person who when you left an interview would say to you 'look, this is very good' or 'you could have done this in another way', but he wasn't trained either." (ESP 2)

If immigrant-origin politicians were asked questions on support programs, they often rejected the question by saying "your fate is in your own hands". However, when programs were referenced, particularly among younger respondents, it is evident that financial assistance for educational purposes like scholarships are regarded as particularly beneficial, even if a direct effect on the political career can be questioned. And being a politician at the local level is – to varying degrees – hardly remunerated. This requires resources, especially time. A significant portion of the interviewees in Germany come from working class backgrounds and are more or less com-

pelled to earn money during their studies, also because of the absence of a parental "safety net". Consequently, financial support is a crucial element for pursuing a political career.

In Switzerland, political positions are part-time and voluntary, with most politicians being concurrently engaged in their (primary) professions ("militia" system). In the absence of formal support programs, informal mentoring (often provided by an allied person in the party) is crucial. The interviewees frequently consider themselves being tossed into challenging circumstances, and they often cite the process of "learning by doing" as a key aspect of their early careers.

"Whoever was there was self-taught, they had to learn everything by themselves ... I had to learn everything on my own, how to draw up texts, how to submit them, etc." (CH 2)

In all countries, most interviewees cited the previously mentioned narrative of "hard work" and the necessity to work at least twice as hard to succeed. This shows that many immigrant-origin politicians feel the need to compensate for their (perceived) disadvantages independently rather than using or having access to institutionalized support mechanisms. In instances where programs are identified and utilized, they are observed to be either beneficial or at the very least, "not harmful". Such responses suggest that programs could have a positive impact on the success of current and future generations.

3.5 The road to repeated success

To a significant degree, the first legislative term is a learning experience. MPs who have already served on other, primarily lower political levels, e. g. as councilors, enter parliament with a certain degree of knowledge. Yet, the first term has a significant impact on whether a political career continues or ends. There are several aspects deserving special attention to be dealt with in this chapter.

3.5.1 Committee assignment in light of the immigrant origin

An important segment of a parliamentarian's legislative work is done in committees. And working in a specific committee allows for building up a policy profile and consolidating a base of support for a political career. There tend to be more prestigious committees (often financial, foreign, domestic or defense policies) and less prestigious ones (e. g. petitions,

development and aid, or rural affairs), but both over time and depending on the salience of issues, committee prestige is subject to change. It's the parliamentary groups and their leaders who decide on committee assignments, and this selection is still considered to be a component of the 'secret garden of politics' (*Gallagher* and *Marsh* 1988). A "rookie", being elected for the first time, can hardly be expected to become a member of a prestigious committee and may not be able to get into a committee (s)he prefers, unless they belong to a new party where everyone else is also a "rookie" (e. g., Podemos, Ciudadanos or other new parties) or they belong to very small parties in which each MP sometimes needs to join several committees. It is usually easier for politicians of small parliamentary groups to join preferred committees, since intra-group competition is lower.

For immigrant-origin politicians, the background poses specific challenges, both from the demand and the supply side. Parties and parliamentary groups, immigrant groups in civil society as well as the media often expect immigrant-origin MPs to work in committees that deal with migration-related issues (demand) while only a portion of the immigrant-origin MPs, especially of the political Left, want to focus their parliamentary work on such issues.

"They say, you are an [race redacted] woman. You're not an expert on education, or just a politician with interesting thoughts about different issues that we think are important, no, you are an [race redacted] woman first and foremost. I don't know what to do anymore, should I put a blonde wig?" (NL 26)

Except for the UK with its high number of immigrant-origin MPs, the expectation and pressure of the parties on immigrant-origin politicians to (also) deal with migration issues, is a pattern observed throughout. In Switzerland, a connection between the lack of "Swissness" and the pressure to deal with migration-related issues could be detected. Both in the Netherlands and in Germany, some interviewees reported that they were denied recognition for expertise outside the migration/integration policy area. And a narrow perception of their expertise limits their chances to influence policy in other areas. Finally, being a woman can also prevent a parliamentarian from being admitted to a prestigious, male-dominated committee, as one of the few immigrant-origin politicians in Spain reported.

3.5.2 Developing expertise and hard work

The importance of policy expertise for a political career was a recurrent topic in the interviews in Germany, Switzerland, and the UK. Being a valuable expert hinders the party from rendering support. Several German interviewees

added that a certain degree of thematic flexibility to serve the parliamentary group's interest would also be advantageous. In some cases, the personal background is considered of extra value, as immigrant-origin MPs in the UK mention: Having roots, for instance in a country on the European continent, is considered useful in quite a number of policy areas, such as foreign policy, trade, immigration, and the relationship with the European Union. Developing policy expertise, sometimes on migration or in combination with personal background, is a crucial element for lasting success in politics. In Spain however, belonging to the right faction of the parliamentary group as well as political discretion seem to be of greater importance.

"When you are a minority, you have to fight harder." (NL 9)

"And as far as people of immigrant origin are concerned: you have to be twice, three times, four times, five times as good to have a chance." (GER 11)

In the Netherlands and in Germany, immigrant-origin MPs repeatedly reported that they need to work much harder than non immigrant-origin MPs to succeed. The credibility of such assessments is high, and hard work not only seems necessary to be able to stay in politics, but it sometimes also serves as a protective shield against racist criticism. As one German MP said, it is difficult to attack a parliamentarian who works tirelessly on aspects of his or her personal background.

3.5.3 Migration-related issues and group representation

Many immigrant-origin politicians indicate that migration-related issues and the question of group representation are aspects they are confronted with repeatedly, and they need to decide on how to deal with them. It might be easier for those MPs whose policy focus is on migration-related issues and who consider themselves to be representatives of immigrant-origin citizens or of those sharing the country of origin with them. However, this is the minority of immigrant-origin politicians.

While most immigrant-origin MPs are reluctant towards any form of group representation, becoming a representative causes additional pressure from immigrant-origin groups to represent their interests. If the number of immigrant-origin politicians is small, like in Spain, the quest for group representation seems to be higher. Several Spanish politicians of immigrant-origin want to represent communities of immigrant origin, take care of their issues and intend to push their political participation.

"One of my cousins pushed me ... She told me: 'You are in a situation, playing in the political field and you have a margin of manoeuvre ... you have to do something for those who are persecuted and repressed there.' And so I did and I had the satisfaction of working in such a solvent way, of receiving all the significant dissidents who came to Madrid, taking them to see the President, taking them to see the Minister of Foreign Affairs, taking them to see the president of the Chamber, and many of them ... that is a great personal satisfaction, eh? Some very well-known ones like José Daniel Ferrer, who is a leader of the eastern part of Cuba in opposition to the Castro dictatorship, thanked me publicly in a meeting for my work. But some unknown ones, who had been in prison, told me: 'I want to thank you because your activity, according to my jailer, meant protection from the mistreatment I received in prison.' So, I was doing something for the benefit of ..., but I also knew that the smallest nonsense, which is a written question that I put on the record, which is the simplest parliamentary product, had an effect on the oppressors, you know?" (ESP 1)

In other countries, such connections are weaker, but most immigrant-origin parliamentarians feel some responsibility to also support the immigrant-origin group(s) they are connected to. However, expectations on group representation often result in disappointment, since MPs are representatives of the whole population, a constituency, and are also members of a party or parliamentary group. "I am not owned by anybody", as a Dutch interviewee expressed, exemplifies the respective struggles of immigrant-origin MPs, but also exhibits that the link between immigrant-origin groups and immigrant-origin politicians is moderate at best. Especially in the UK where the representation of constituents is more crucial, positive discrimination of a certain group bears additional risks for an intended re-election. And with respect to career progression, minority representation does not seem to play an important role, even if some MPs consider it important to (also) get the immigrant vote.

The avoidance of dealing with minority-related issues is more difficult. Migration issues are recurring, may these be in the immigrant-origin politician's policy focus or not. They are pushed by immigrant groups, the media or even by the party, to take a stand on topics that have to do with their immigrant origin. These issues are opportunities to get public attention as well as traps to get or remain pigeonholed. Some of the German MPs labelled it a temptation to respond to such demands, since media attention is often more guaranteed for migration-related statements than for statements that fall into their core (and migration-unrelated) policy expertise.

Immigrant-origin politicians often must find a balance between their own policy interest, demands by others, and sometimes also with a perceived obligation to be a voice for underrepresented groups of immigrant origin in politics. And even if there are MPs whose focus has always been minority issues, especially on the political Left, the observation in the Swiss context may well be true for all countries: migration issues are more important at an early stage of a career, but they become less relevant over time (*Bailer* et al. 2022). Or, from a career perspective: an exclusive focus on migration-related issues and immigrant-origin groups is rather a constraint for a political career than an asset.

3.5.4 Building networks

Only in some contexts, networking was referred to as being very important for a successful political career. One German interviewee said that networking is her "main job" in politics, and another that "you are lost without networks". While initial access to networks is often provided by mentors, intensive and successful parliamentary work tends to both strengthen and broaden networks. The importance of networks can also be seen in the comments of several former immigrant-origin MPs in Germany who said the termination of their political career had to do with their negligence in building a network.

There are networks in society and party networks. Extra-party connections range from social circles, educational institutions and partners in business, bodies of former activities (local councils, migrant organizations) to international organizations. Party-specific networks (also: party youth organizations) are of higher value for a political career if these are intra-party (policy-specific, factional). Inter-party networks (professionally or among immigrant-origin MPs) are useful for succeeding when making policy proposals and when fighting common opponents like anti-immigrant parties, but of hardly any relevance for re-election, as evidence from Spain and Germany shows. This is probably one reason for some immigrant-origin MPs to shun inter-party networks among immigrant-origin MPs, another is the potential pigeonholing.

3.5.5 Mentoring

The further a career advances the less mentoring plays a role. If there are mentors, they are now rather giving advice than opening doors, which has to do with their limited influence on this career stage, but also with a higher degree of competition among MPs.

"I think it's rather clever and yet it's a bit of a taboo in politics to simply say: As a new MP, I want some feedback from you. I noticed that when

I asked [two older MPs] for coffee in my first year and just came right out and said that obviously not many MPs do it that way, but the conversations were incredibly helpful. But my greatest mentor, who I would also describe as such today, is (...) my predecessor as [official], even if I sometimes don't know immediately how to deal with a political problem, I still like to pick up the phone and ask for advice." (GER 20)

Now other actors, especially party and parliamentary group leaders, play more important roles in the support of a selection of politicians. On the other hand, several immigrant-origin MPs start to become mentors themselves and offer internships and jobs to young politicians interested in pursuing a political career. Immigrant-origin MPs realized that "[spending] time with experienced politicians from whom I could learn," as a Swiss interviewee said, had been an important component of their own careers. And at least in the German context, interns and employees of immigrant origin tend to be overrepresented among immigrant-origin MPs.

3.5.6 Obstacles

Prejudices, discrimination, hate speech and violence are pervasive elements of the experience of many immigrant-origin MPs. Attacks come from the public, the media, from opponents in parliament, and they also happen in the own parliamentary group. Many have experienced stereotyping, insults and discrimination during their whole life – especially Muslim MPs report that in the aftermath of 9/11 prejudice and hate against immigrant-origin MPs of Muslim faith has intensified. All immigrant-origin MPs had to realize that anti-immigrant sentiments persist in politics, even in higher political positions. Some report micro-racism like being repeatedly stopped by security personnel in parliamentary or official buildings or being mistaken for service personnel.

"I got into the elevator with my intern (...) There was a well-known politician, a politician well-known in national politics, and one floor later another, not quite as well-known, experienced national politician got in. The two were obviously friends or knew each other. Then they joked and giggled and just before we got downstairs, they turned to us completely out of context and asked: And who do you work for? And my intern. He immediately understood that this was a really stupid, unpleasant situation and it was really bad for him and he just said: I work for him. And then I just said I'm a member of parliament. And I think those were the most unpleasant ten seconds until we got to the next floor, where everyone got out." (GER 1)

And while these challenges might not have been a direct obstacle to a sustained political career, it becomes obvious that immigrant-origin MPs require a particularly high degree of resilience to stay in politics as life-threatening attacks occur against interviewees in all countries, as several politicians underscore.

"Particularly when Brexit was, later on, on the agenda, we were conscious that there was some kind of hostility towards Polish people. I do remember that one of my children at school was told to go back to Poland in about 2006, you know, after, you know, 60 years later [laugh] No connection whatsoever. And that was something which, you know, you begin to think about. It wasn't big, I'm not insisting it was, you know, but you just begin to think about it. [...] Some of my children, because I was very much, I lived in an area, very local, my children got probably bullied at school, probably because I was the MP. Not in a very big way. They weren't attacked but, nevertheless, they were bullied and, you know, made fun of their names and the rest of it. And that's something which I wish I had known and that I suspect is not unusual amongst MPs." (UK 3)

As the analysis of the interviews with immigrant-origin MPs in the Netherlands, Spain, and Switzerland show, criticism of national traditions and history, may it be naturalization, nationhood or the consequences of the colonial past, frequently trigger othering like "you are not entitled to criticize anything Swiss" or "If you are not happy, go back to your country", as immigrant-origin MPs in Switzerland reported. And when it comes to the promotion to political positions, not only the necessity to work harder than other MPs is again being referred to, but some German and Spanish interviewees also talk about a glass ceiling, and several Swiss interviewees even say they have reportedly been denied certain functions because of their skin color.

Another aspect that came up frequently is sexism, both as a single issue and as an intersectional one. Several German female MPs of immigrant origin said that their migration history was less of a problem compared to sexism. And Swiss as well as Spanish women MPs talked about sexist behavior in parliament, but also within their parties.

"Maybe at that time the fact that I was Hindu weighed in because ... Well, the fact of having people from all communities on the list was something that the party considered appropriate to obtain more support from the citizens and at that time I was young, I was a woman and, well, I am still a woman [smiles] and Hindu, right? And I think that those qualities, well, well, made me be on the list. [...] Maybe throughout my life I have noticed

more that ... [shrugs shoulders] These issues that one always says ... [grinds teeth]. More for being a woman than for being Hindu. [...] I think it has been more for being a woman than for being Hindu. And age perhaps, let's see. I have the positions that I think have the most responsibility now, right? I am already somewhat mature, now. I am now X years old. But maybe in my beginnings it was the fact of being a woman that was more decisive when it came to noticing that difference in treatment than for being Hindu. And not something too exaggerated either. But yes, to a certain extent, that glass ceiling is more noticeable. I also noticed it more before than now. [...] But ... I think yes, I could say that it is more because I am a woman than because I am from another culture." (ESP 3)

In some cases, devaluating comments frequently switch from the immigrant origin to gender and back. And there are also cases where gender amplifies the discrimination of immigrant-origin MPs. Consequently, women immigrant-origin MPs who, in some countries, may experience some competitive advantages to get on party lists compared to immigrant-origin men, report facing more obstacles once they are elected. In an increasingly toxic environment, immigrant-origin individuals are demotivated to pursue a career in politics, especially women.

3.5.7 Party service and career

An MP needs the party and/or parliamentary group to succeed. Tensions arise when expectations from MPs and their party differ and they are not able to define a common ground. To a significant degree, ideology and integration into a certain wing or faction of the parliamentary group allow for better planning and the development of career strategies. Yet again, the immigrant origin of a parliamentarian may not fit well into established patterns. Both in Germany and Switzerland, immigrant-origin MPs report about the need to balance out expectations by the party and immigrant-origin groups to deal with migration-related issues or to represent the immigrant-origin community. Some immigrant-origin MPs are willing and happy to play the role assigned by the party, some are patient and accept unwanted assignments at least temporarily in a first term, but especially when tokenism lingers on, the decision to quit politics becomes also an option. It is not easy to disentangle the general pattern of frustration of MPs whose expectations are not met from origin-specific patterns of their relationship with the party. Yet, there is at least some evidence that pigeonholing over a longer period is a particularly demotivating factor for those immigrant-origin MPs who entered politics with policy expertise other than migration-related.

"I'm quitting now, I didn't run again, [...], my party has decided [...] I wasn't allowed to do [...] policy in the commission until the end. I would probably have had to put more heart and soul into [...] policy. And also more competence, I think." (CH 7)

3.5.8 The local base

In a majoritarian electoral system like in the UK, constituency support is crucial. Especially in "marginal seats", keeping constituents satisfied is extremely important. If MPs lose the support of their party in the constituency and of their voters, they are done. In a mixed-member electoral system, the local base is also of importance. Immigrant-origin MPs in Germany consider the local base, presence in the constituency and the degree of popularity, especially in the constituency, very important for continued success. For the reason of direct democracy, the local base is also very important in Switzerland. Frequent interaction with the public and the potential mobilization in form of referenda, petitions or strikes, foster local support. And another element is of importance in the Swiss context: the ability to fluently speak the local dialect and the social integration in local organizations or associations.

"It was a decisive moment for me. Because there was this political mobilization of citizens, 15,000 people. It was huge, and we held the referendum to win, and we won." (CH 3)

In the Netherlands and in Spain, the local base seems to be less important. And in all countries, the support of local immigrant-origin communities is seldomly referred to with respect to re-election. This contrasts some findings in the initial phases of a political career, in which the support of the immigrant-origin community and strategic considerations of parties to catch the immigrant vote, play a role in some of the countries studied. A prolonged career is in some contexts (see above) dependent on local or constituency support, but increasingly also on the support of party leaders and candidate selection committees. The immigrant origin as such seems to play less of a role, except for some discriminatory patterns discussed earlier.

3.5.9 Former MPs: Reasons for failure or exit

As chapter 2.5 has shown, reasons for failure or exit differ not only by person, but also by country. While voluntary exit is the dominant pattern in Switzerland and in the Netherlands, a lack of renomination is typical for Germany and Spain, and electoral defeat is the dominant pattern in the UK, due to the first-past-the-post electoral system punishing candidates for party losses. Due to the voluntary and part-time character of their positions, politicians in Switzerland do not necessarily see their involvement in poli-

tics as a lifelong or very long-term commitment. However, even if there may have been conflicts or disappointments behind the scenes (e. g. ranging from being pigeonholed in migration policy to being the victim of hate speech), MPs generally leave quietly: they withdraw from the media spotlight and do not run again. Both in Switzerland and in the Netherlands, it is unusual to leave in conflict, and in all countries, it is difficult to look behind the scenes and identify elements of conflict (*Bergmann* and *Wüst* 2025; *Runderkamp* and *Kenny*, forthcoming). In Germany and Spain, the pattern of tokenism seems to have resulted in the replacement of a few immigrant-origin MPs by other immigrant-origin candidates. And, as mentioned earlier, some former immigrant-origin MPs in Germany think that their poor networks resulted in an involuntary exit.

3.6 Advice to young aspirants and rookies by the interviewees

The immigrant-origin politicians we interviewed are people who made and sustained a political career, and they thus are a particular group of 'survivors'. While we could have asked for factors that improved their career, we instead decided to ask them on their advice for young aspirants of immigrant origin to run a successful political career. They came up with a myriad of suggestions. Across all countries, the following five pieces of advice were given: Try to acquire sufficient procedural knowledge in politics, work hard (you might need to be twice as good), invest time in building a network, let yourself be known and be present (also: locally), stay positive and don't give up (be confident and resilient).

Of the additional suggestions, some were mentioned in more than one country, as follows. In the beginning of a political career, passion for certain issues and service vocation are helpful. For the first generation, advanced language skills and knowledge about the people and the political system are indispensable. Early political engagement is also very helpful, may it be in an organization or in a party's youth organization (if available). And the party should be chosen wisely: shared values, people one can relate to, and strategic considerations (e. g. concerning party size) matter. A realistic view on party work (which is intense and time-consuming) is helpful, and young aspirants are also encouraged to take the initiative to become politically engaged.

Professionalization and certain skills (communication, managing criticism) are crucial, but also the opportunity to learn from experienced colleagues

in the business of politics. And professional experience outside politics is of additional value. Presence in local communities (and particularly not only in one's own ethnic community), gaining trust and getting a better understanding of local and regional problems, and even – if non-existent – the development of local identity, is very helpful for continued support. While being outspoken and authentic contributes to a political career, too much emphasis on one's own immigrant origin and migration-related issues bears the risk of getting stuck in just one policy area which is likely to harm the career. It is necessary to either bring expertise in other policy areas or to develop such competencies. Finally, it should be noted that on the one hand interviewees in several countries mentioned the political environment got more hostile and therefore also less attractive for immigrant-origin citizens, but on the other hand, violence has seldom been referred to as a main obstacle for a successful political career.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS IN LIGHT OF THE INTERVIEWEES' SUGGESTIONS

Several immigrant-origin politicians had recommendations for how the political representation of immigrant-origin MPs could be improved. The following list of recommendations structures and weighs these suggestions in light of the overall findings in REPCHANCE.

The first two suggestions pertain to the frame of political participation and representation, and primarily come from interviewees in Germany and Switzerland:

(1a) **A higher share of the immigrant-origin population should be eligible to vote, whether through the extension of voting rights for non-citizens or through easier naturalization processes.**

(1b) **"Some kind of quota system" should, at least, be discussed as a potential means to get more immigrant-origin politicians into parliaments.**

The next two recommendations pertain to enhancing the motivation of immigrant-origin citizens for a political engagement which have also repeatedly been mentioned by British, German, and Spanish interviewees:

(2a) **The importance of politics and political engagement for democracy deserves more emphasis, starting already in school.**

(2b) **The enhancement of information on how politics and the political system works is necessary, especially for less educated, politically distant and underrepresented groups. Information on social media, by teachers in schools and material for immigrant-origin communities would be useful.**

The following recommendations point to the need for society to face the social reality which has been mentioned in all countries:

(3a) **Our societies have become increasingly diverse, and immigrant-origin citizens need more support in acquiring language, educational and professional skills. Civil organizations could contribute to supporting diversity by providing grants ranging from stipends to financial support for rather small things like childcare or more expensive professional attire.**

(3b) **A main obstacle for equal opportunities is discrimination. There is more need for civic education against prejudice and discrimination, and immigrant communities need to be recognized as integral parts of our societies on an equal footing.**

The bulk of recommendations were directed to the political parties and, in part, also reflect and specify the recommendations above:

(4a) **Parties need to be open for politically interested immigrant-origin citizens. Especially since visible role models for political careers are scarce, systematic recruitment by parties is necessary.**

(4b) **More training programs are needed to gain necessary skills, especially in political communication. Party support for coaching and mentoring of immigrant-origin MPs (and all political novices more generally) would also help, and such programs may well be more effective if providers from outside politics are included.**

(4c) **Structural discrimination and tokenism in parties need to end. Therefore, awareness among leaders and more internal support structures for diversity are necessary.**

(4d) **Parties, as well as civil society, should be more attentive and active about hate speech and violence directed at politically underrepresented groups like citizens of immigrant origin, but also women.**

At last, many of our interviewees were willing to take part in REPCHANCE because they are of the opinion that the topic of political representation of immigrant-origin citizens deserves more attention. Some of their first-hand experiences were shocking, others encouraging, and their reflections are useful to develop and improve strategies for a fair representation of immigrant-origin citizens in politics. Some even underlined the necessity for the kind of research presented here, leading to the last recommendation:

(5) **There should be more robust continuous monitoring and empirically based reporting on the political inclusion of immigrant-origin citizens in democracies.**

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APPENDIX

Table A: Representation of IO MPs in five European national parliaments

Country	IO MP share	IO MPs	Total MPs
Germany	11.4%	84	736
The Netherlands	17.5%	28	160
Spain	1.5%	6	407
Switzerland	16%	32	200
United Kingdom	14.6%	98	673
Total	**11.4%**	**248**	**2,176**

Table A Data is based on the following national elections: Germany 2021, The Netherlands 2021, Spain 2019, Switzerland 2019, United Kingdom 2019.

Table B: Full list of countries of origin of IO MPs in five national parliaments

Country of origin	IO MPs	DE	NL	ES	CH	UK
Turkey	27	19	5		2	1
India	20				1	19
Italy	15	5	2		6	4
Pakistan	15	1	12			12
Morocco	14	1	1		1	
Poland	10	4	1		1	4
Ireland	9					9
Nigeria	8					8
Yugoslavia and successor states	8	8				
Germany	7				4	3
Islamic Republic of Iran	6	6				
Australia	5				1	4
France	5	1			3	1
Ghana	5		1			4
Soviet Union and successor states	5	5				
Argentina	4			4		
Austria	4	2			1	1
Bangladesh	4					4
Iraq	4	3				1
Jamaica	4					4
Czech Republic	3	2				1
Israel	3		1			2
Netherlands	3	3				
United States of America	3	1				2
Afghanistan	2	1	1			
Arab Republic of Egypt	2	2				
Belgium	2	2				
China	2				1	1

Denmark	2	1					1	
Greece	2	2						
Guyana	2						2	
New Zealand	2						2	
Norway	2					1	1	
Romania	2	2						
Senegal	2	1		1				
Suriname	2		2					
Syrian Arab Republic	2	2						
Antilles	1		1					
Brazil	1			1				
Cameroon	1	1						
Chile	1	1						
Cyprus	1						1	
Eritrea	1	1						
Ethiopia	1		1					
Finland	1	1						
Grenada	1						1	
Hungary	1		1					
Kenya	1						1	
Malaysia	1						1	
Portugal	1	1						
Republic of Korea	1	1						
Republic of Yemen	1	1						
Saint Kitts and Nevis	1						1	
Sierra Leone	1						1	
Slovak Republic	1					1		
Somalia	1						1	
South Africa	1						1	
Spain	1	1						
Sri Lanka	1						1	
Switzerland	1	1						
Tanzania	1						1	
United Kingdom	1	1						

Table C: Fieldwork

Country	Interview characteristics	
	conducted	**mode**
Germany	60 (+17) interviews; conducted by three interviewers; June 2022 to December 2023	Presence: 45 (75%); Online/Zoom: 14 (23%); Phone: 1 (2%)
Spain	20 interviews; conducted by two interviewers; March 2023 to November 2024	Presence: 6 (30%); Online/Zoom: 14 (70%)
United Kingdom	20 interviews; conducted by two interviewers; October 2023 to November 2024	Presence: 9 (45%); Online/Zoom: 11 (55%)
Switzerland	38 interviews; conducted by three interviewers; August 2023 to June 2024	Presence: 17 Online/Zoom: 19
The Netherlands	50 interviews; conducted by three interviewers; June 2003 to November 2024	Presence: 30 (60%); Online/Zoom: 20 (40%)

Country	Interviewee characteristics				
	sector	**Gender**	**political ideology**	**political level**	**identifiability of IO**
Germany	Politicians (60); other groups (17)	33 men (55%); 27 women (45%)	47 left-wing (78%); 12 right-wing (20%) 1 local party (2%)	21 national level (35%); 20 regional level (33%); 19 local level (32%)	Politicians: 53 identifiable (88%); 7 not identifiable (12%)
Spain	Politicians (20)	7 men (35%); 13 women (65%)	12 left-wing (60%), 7 right-wing (35%), 1 centre-right (5%)	5 national level (25%); 7 regional level (35%); 8 local level (40%)	12 identifiable (60%); 3 not identifiable (15%); 5 ambiguous – only Latin American accent (25%)
United Kingdom	Politicians (20)	12 men (60%); 8 women (40%)	12 left-wing (60%), 2 centre-left (10%), 3 centre (15%), 3 right-wing (15%)	7 national level (35%); 6 devolved assemblies (30%); 7 local level (35%)	16 identifiable (80%); 2 not identifiable (10%); 2 ambiguous – only a bit of accent (10%)
Switzerland	Politicians (26); Business, civil society and state institutions (12)	20 men (53%); 18 women (47%)	14 left-wing (54%); 5 centre (19%); 7 right-wing (27%)	20 national level (80%); 6 cantonal level (20%)	Politicians: 11 identifiable (42%); 5 not identifiable (19%); 10 ambiguous (39%)
The Netherlands	Politicians (49); Other groups (1)	16 men (32%); 34 women (68%)	31 left-wing (62%); 19 right-wing (38%)	1 european level (2%); 7 local level (14%); 41 national level (82%); 1 provincial level (2%)	50 identifiable (100%)