

Social Mobility in the EU

The European Foundation for the Improvement of the Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound) published the results of the study “Social Mobility in the EU”. The Eurofound’s network of correspondents, including [Praxis as Estonian correspondent](#), gave comprehensive information about all EU Member States and thus played an important role in the study.

Across the European Union there are increasing concerns that younger generations will have fewer opportunities for upward social mobility compared to the previous generations. Therefore, the aim of the study was to look into the patterns of intergenerational social mobility, identify the key barriers to upward social mobility and reflect policy debates and responses to tackle these challenges, covering all 28 EU Member States.

The key indicator measuring social mobility in this report is occupational status. The report also distinguishes between absolute and relative social mobility, whereas the first refers mostly to structural changes in labour market and economy in general (i.e new occupations replacing old ones) and the latter refers to the societal openness and the possibility to move between classes in social hierarchy.

The quantitative analysis based on the European Social Survey indeed showed that in case of absolute social mobility in majority of countries the extent of upward mobility has decreased, while downward mobility has increased for men. In case of women, the upward mobility has increased in third of countries, while downward mobility has remained the same in majority of countries. In Estonia, in case of men there has been no change in mobility, while for women immobility has increased while upward mobility has decreased. Regarding the relative social mobility, countries are rather different. In Estonia, both men and women have started to experience decreasing level of relative social mobility.

When analysing the key barriers to social mobility 6 main barriers were identified: access to early education and child care places and its cost in early childhood, tracking or early selection and financial barriers during school years, and transition to labour market and occupation in working age. The study identified that in case of Estonia, the main barriers to social mobility are tracking or early selection in childhood and transition to labour market.

The main drivers of the debate and policy responses related to social mobility include widening income inequalities, diminished access to public services, inequalities in education, intergenerational transmission of poverty, gender inequalities, integration of immigrants, nepotism and corruption and growing regional disparities. In case of Estonia, the most important drivers identified were income inequalities, gender inequalities and integration of immigrants (referring mainly to Russian-speaking minority), while policy measures have also tackled the availability of childcare places and inequalities in education (i.e. free higher education). However, in some way, all of the identified drivers have been discussed in Estonia.

Full report is available [here](#).