

Selection: from Asia to Europe

A one-day workshop on December 2, 2011

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Almost twenty years ago, sex selective abortions in several Asian countries started to appear on the demographers' radar as a growing number of couples resorted to pregnancy termination on learning that their fetus was female. Today, this existence of this phenomenon is now well established in many countries across Asia and the recent censuses conducted in China and India have already confirmed the prevalence and local intensity of prenatal sex selection. This has already generated a great bulk of scientific literature and has also led several Asian governments with support from international agencies to devise and launch various policy initiatives against gender discrimination.

Yet, sex selection is far from being confined to South and East Asia or to developing countries. It has been demonstrated for instance that the sex ratio at birth in countries of the South Caucasus region, at the border of Asia and Europe, rose almost immediately after the break-up of the Soviet Union. Of late, gender imbalances have also been documented for several diasporic communities of Asian origin in various European countries—a trend also observed among Asian immigrants established in North America. Even lesser known is the prevalence of sex selection in parts of Southeast Europe, with traces of adverse sex ratio at birth perceptible in civil registration data and census estimates in several areas of the Western Balkans. But evidence remains limited to sparse and at times indirect demographic estimates of gender imbalances among births and children. Moreover, the practice of sex selective abortions in Europe itself has not been extensively documented for lack of dedicated surveys among women, couples or medical practitioners.

The purpose of this meeting is to bring together for the first time participants from various European countries with experience on gender discrimination or sex selection among Asian diasporas or in the Western Balkans. Research on sex selection has remained so far isolated and mostly limited to specific communities or subregions and there is a growing for a more sustained documentation of the various dimensions of gender discrimination in Europe. One outcome of this workshop should be the preparation of a joint research note on the extent of sex selection in Europe, its social and cultural characteristics and the way ahead for future research and intervention.

Topics to be covered by the workshop:

- Asia's experience: identification of gender imbalances, interpretation, campaigns and effectiveness
- Gender imbalances among Asian diasporas in Europe: measure, interpretation.
- Gender and kinship structures in the Western Balkans
- Sex selection in SE Europe and the Caucasus: measure, trend analysis and correlates.
- Qualitative evidence for sex selection behaviour in Europe.

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