

## INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION OUTLOOK—SOPEMI 2008

### Policy trends in international migration

#### *Highlights*

**Contexts:** Migration policy is a complex area and countries often take very different approaches to migration. Nevertheless, some broad trends can be discerned, driven in part by the fact that many OECD countries are facing similar economic and social challenges. These include ageing populations, declining numbers of young people, and shortages of highly skilled professionals. Many economies are also short of lesser skilled workers, which migration is helping to rectify. However, previous waves of low skilled immigrants have often faced difficulties in integrating into their adopted countries—economically, socially, culturally and in education—and policy is increasingly aimed at trying to avoid a repeat of such problems.

**Broad trends:** Bearing in mind the risks of over-generalising, there is a general tendency in OECD countries to adopt what might be described as a more “proactive” approach in immigration policy. In this context, two ideas stand out: 1) Governments increasingly want to be able to select immigrants, while attempting to close off entry to irregular immigrants and increasing flows of highly skilled labour immigrants. 2) Governments are spelling out more clearly what they see as the rights and the responsibilities of immigrants, especially when it comes to the role immigrants should play in managing their own integration.

Four main trends in migration policy can be seen in the OECD area:

- The introduction of new administrative structures to better manage migration.
- In Europe, the adaptation of national legislation to EU standards.
- A general tendency towards promoting labour migration.
- The development of policies and practices to speed up integration.

**New administrative structures:** A number of countries have made major changes to how migration is managed at government level. Most notably, perhaps, the United Kingdom has created a new government agency with responsibility for borders and immigration and has introduced a new points-based system for selecting immigrants. France, Hungary and Romania have also created new government units to manage migration.

**Adapting European legislation:** Among European OECD countries, policy changes have been largely influenced by the evolution of European legislation covering free movement and humanitarian migration.

**Promoting labour migration:** Perhaps the most notable area of policy convergence is the increasing focus on attracting highly skilled immigrants with the aim of raising national economic competitiveness. This has been a priority for some of the traditional settlement countries,

like Australia, Canada and New Zealand, for some time, but they are being joined by countries in western Europe and, increasingly, by countries in eastern Europe too, notably Poland and the Czech Republic.

**Integration policies:** Approaches vary, but countries are increasingly imposing integration tests and language requirements before allowing permanent settlement, and, in some cases, introducing formal citizenship ceremonies.

### **Find out more ...**

To find out more about recent trends in international migration, see Part I, Section C of the International Migration Outlook—SOPEMI 2008, from the OECD.