

## Mexico

In a context of declining GDP and employment growth in 2007 compared to 2006, permanent-type migration to Mexico grew marginally in 2007, reaching a little over 7 000 persons, an insignificant level relative to Mexico's population of close to 110 million persons. There is no breakdown by category of entry.

Recorded entries of seasonal workers, largely from Guatemala, have seen a decline in 2007, from about 40 000 to under 28 000. There exist other temporary movements, of artists and sportsmen, senior managers, scientific and technical personnel, investors, other professionals, etc., but these movements are also limited in scope.

Unauthorised migration at the southern border, largely of persons with the intention of moving on to the United States, appears to be declining, with a close to 40 % drop in the number of unauthorised foreigners returned by Mexican immigration authorities in 2007, compared to 2006. The current number of 113 000 returns stands at less than half of the peak level attained in 2005.

Mexican attention on migration issues tends to focus, understandably, on movements of Mexican citizens to the United States which, however, have undergone significant declines over the period 2005-2008, compared to the past. The growth in the unauthorised immigrant population in the United States, heavily dominated by Mexican nationals, grew by an annual average of 525 000 between 2000 and 2005, but by about 275 000 between 2005 and 2008. Some of this decline is due to tighter border control and the detention and return of undocumented migrants in the United States, but some also to increasing fees for assistance in illegal border crossing, the deteriorating economic conditions in the United States and unfavourable attitudes towards immigrants in some jurisdictions. The more difficult conditions of entry and of stay in the United States have led to an increase in asylum seeking in Canada, with 6 500 requests from Mexican nationals currently representing almost one fourth of Canadian asylum requests.

The number of Mexicans using legal channels of entry (excluding border crossing cards) fell slightly from about 300 000 to close to 290 000 in 2007, with green cards granted to Mexican nationals remaining approximately stable at about 50 000. Migration to Canada, the third partner in the NAFTA agreement, stood at close to 26 000 in 2007, with about 3 000 of this consisting of permanent residents and an additional 18 000 of temporary workers, the balance being international students.

Policy developments in 2008 include the decriminalisation of undocumented migration into Mexico, which henceforth becomes an administrative misdemeanour, subject to fines.

To regulate movements across its southern border, Mexico has introduced two new permits: the border workers permit (FMTF), valid for one year, to regulate the flow and stay of Guatemalan and Belizean workers with job offers from employers in states close to the southern border; and the local visitors permit (FMVL), valid for five years for adults, allowing the bearer legal entry into border towns for access to schools, merchandise purchases, bank deposits and the undertaking of non-profit activities. The new immigration permits essentially formalise the regulation of movements which have been in place for decades but which operated irregularly with the risk of human rights violations.

Repatriation memoranda have been signed with Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras and Nicaragua, with 31 000 persons, out of a total of about 51 000, repatriated under the terms of the memoranda during the first half of 2008.

In October 2008 Cuba and Mexico signed a Memorandum of Understanding to address the issue of the increasing number of Cubans seeking to enter the United State through Mexico, often through trafficking channels. Under United States law, Cuban nationals who reach the United States mainland can remain there and obtain legal residence within a year. The law was originally intended to deal with Cubans trying to reach the United States by sea, but many are now trying to transit through Mexico.

In October 2007, a letter of intent was signed by the Ministries of Labour of Spain and Mexico to establish a pilot programme for the recruitment of Mexican workers for occupations in demand by Spanish companies.