



# Managing Labour Migration

Jean-Pierre Garson

Head of the International Migration Division

Directorate for Employment,  
Labour and Social Affairs, OECD

HIGH LEVEL PARLIAMENTARY CONFERENCE

*Policy Coherence for Development and Migration*

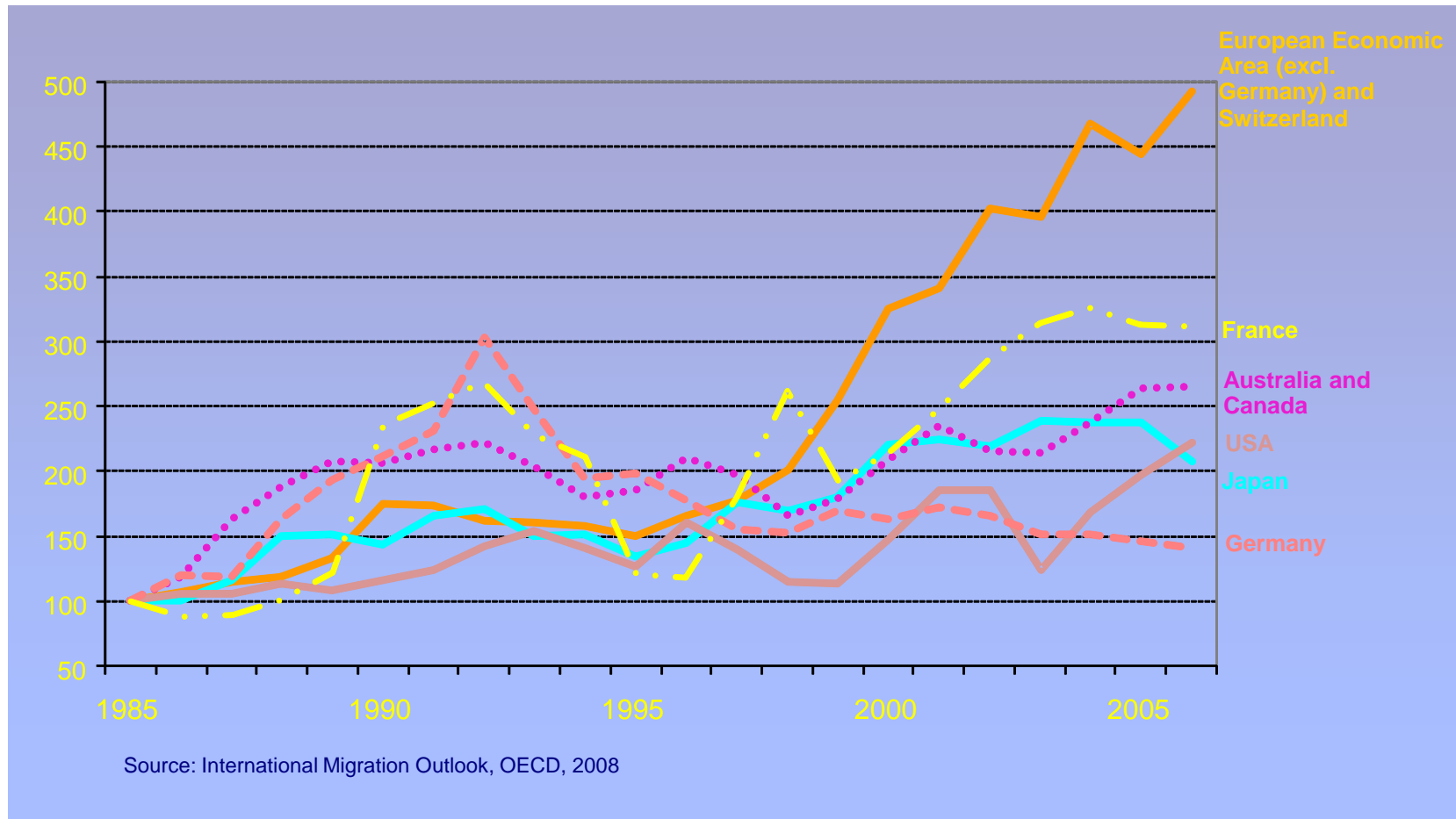
Thursday, 12 February 2009

European Parliament, Brussels

# Recent trends in migration flows

- Immigration has grown in recent years in the OECD area, notably in European OECD countries

Immigration into OECD countries, 1985-2006 (1985=100)



# Recent trends in migration flows (cont.)

- Permanent-type legal immigration of foreign nationals (4 million) increased by 35% since 2003
- Large cross-country variation in inflow rates
- In 2006, about 2.5 million entries of temporary labour migrants, 3 times the number of permanent labour migrants
- Asylum seeking is at its lowest level for more than 20 years
- Growing focus on labour migration, particularly of the *highly-skilled*
- *International students* can remain after graduation to look for work in most countries

# Management of migration for employment

- Demand-driven immigration
  - Employer-initiated with a job offer
    - Education / wage minima
    - In shortage occupations
  - Numbers regulated by employment testing
- Supply-driven immigration
  - Application in response to host-country invitation
    - Point-system selection
    - No job offer necessary
  - Numerical limits, avoiding backlogs
- Growing “hybridisation” of two systems
- Highly-skilled/permanent vs. low-skilled/temporary

# Main issues at stake

- Persistence of **irregular migration** (mainly through overstay) and irregular employment of foreigners.
- Despite, increases in migrants' rights and relatively favourable labour market condition over the past decade...
- ... **the integration of immigrants and their children** remains often weak (but there are large differences by country of residence and nationality).
- **Foreign qualifications** and experience is largely discounted in most OECD countries.

- Evidence from past experience
  - Immigrants are over-represented among lay-offs.
  - Immigrants who arrive during downturns have a harder time at arrival, but also down the line.
  - Not all shortages disappear during a downturn.
- Impact on immigration
  - Expected decline in labour migration.
  - Expected fall in (sponsored) family migration.
  - Returns to origin countries will be limited.
  - Irregular employment of foreigners may increase.
- Impact on origin countries
  - Expected decrease in remittances, at least in the medium-term.

## Key policy questions (1/4):

Is temporary migration a viable option?

- Are labour needs temporary?
- Can one encourage temporary migration for certain forms of migration that are « close » to being temporary? => high turnover occupations.
- Can one enforce temporariness? What about the logistics of large-scale temporary movements?
- Need to go beyond the traditional dichotomy : highly-skilled/permanent vs. low-skilled/temporary

## Key policy questions (2/4): Redirecting irregular migration into legal channels – what is needed ?

- The identification of **labour market needs**
- Permits in **sufficient numbers** to satisfy needs
- **Efficient processing** of permit requests
- The means for **employers** to identify the status of potential employees
- Effective **border control and workplace enforcement** procedures

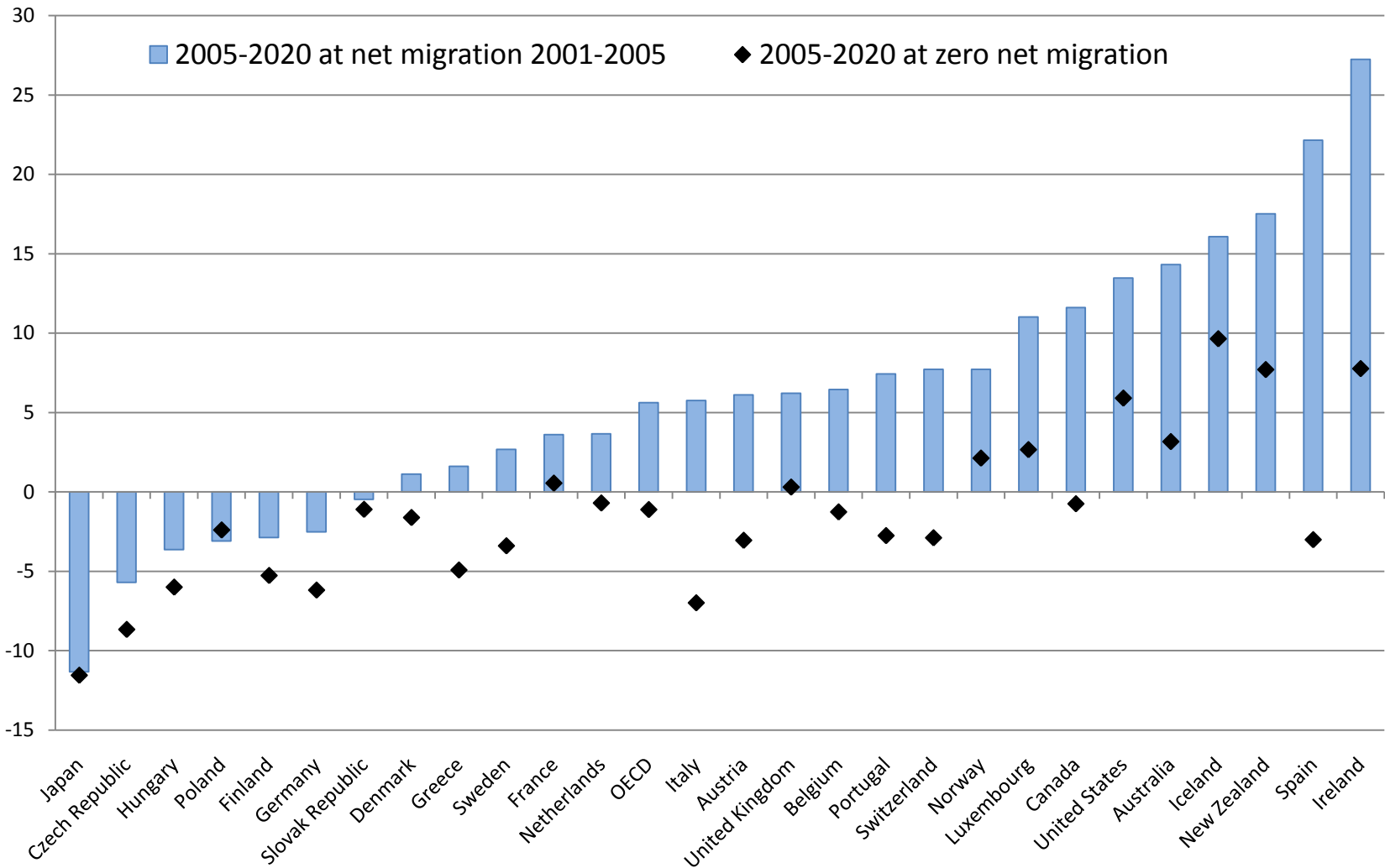
## Key policy questions (3/4):

What policy responses in the context of the current economic crisis ?

- Need to adopt a **comprehensive approach** in managing migration and responding to labour needs, taking into account both short-term outlook and long-term needs.
- Need to avoid cutting back on active **integration measures** and focus on some most vulnerable groups
- Consider **reducing hurdles to return** migration
- Need for **flexibility** => No migration policy is forever and there is not one “size fits all”
- Need to adopt a **balanced discourse** on migration

# Population ageing

**Expected net change in the working-age population over the period 2005-2020,**  
at 2001-2005 net migration levels, as a percentage of the population in 2005



## Key policy questions (4/4):

How to improve policy coherence for development in the field of migration ?

- Reducing obstacles to labour mobility
- Reducing the cost of remittances
- Increasing the available supply of skills in developing countries
- Better sharing the cost of education and training between receiving and origin countries
- Increasing international student enrolment
- Developing pre-migration education or training for permanent migrants

# Selected recent OECD publications on international migration

- OECD (2008), *International Migration Outlook*.
- OECD (2008), *A Profile of immigrant populations in the 21st Century: Data from OECD countries*.
- OECD (2008). *Jobs for Immigrants, Vol.2: Labour Market Integration in Belgium, France, the Netherlands and Portugal*.
- OECD (2008), *The Looming crisis in the Health Workforce – How can OECD Countries Respond?*
- OECD (2008), *The Global Competition for Talent: Mobility of the Highly Skilled*.
- OECD Development Centre (2007), *Gaining from Migration : Towards a New Mobility System*.
- OECD Development Centre (2007), *Policy Coherence for Development Migration and Developing Countries*.