

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The 1990s and the beginning of the new millennium confirmed the increasing role of migration in the context of economic globalisation. An overview of migration trends during this period shows that, while the United States, Canada and Australia remained the major settlement countries, Europe also faced significant migration flows. Within the OECD zone, Europe in fact experienced the most pronounced increase in immigration at the beginning of the 1990s and welcomed the largest numbers of asylum seekers. The increase in recent years of asylum applications in certain Central and Eastern European countries, and to a lesser extent in southern Europe, will undoubtedly contribute to reinforcing this trend in the future.

Economic globalisation has been accompanied by the growing importance of migration flows and the number of asylum seekers

Compared to the situation at the beginning of the 1990s, the proportion of foreigners or immigrants in the total population in 2000, as well as in the active population, increased in most OECD countries, especially in the United States and Australia and, to a lesser extent, in Canada, Japan and Korea. This trend was also strong in the European Economic Area, where the increase in foreign residents has more than compensated for the fall in the foreign population, due to naturalisations, estimated at a yearly average of 550 000 people.

Migration plays a growing role in contributing to the population growth of host countries...

Geopolitical changes of the past decade, in particular the liberalisation of movements of persons from Central and Eastern Europe, have enlarged the geographical frame of reference for international migration. Moreover, an increasing number of immigrants from Asia, sub-Saharan Africa and Central and Latin America, have fuelled the flows heading to several OECD Member countries. For example, one can observe the growth of migration flows originating from China, the Philippines, Romania and, more recently, from the Ukraine, Brazil, Ecuador, Argentina, Senegal, Cape Verde and South Africa. Despite the persistence of traditional flows, the emergence of new flows has modified the distribution by nationality of the foreign population in several host countries. The dispersal of same-origin migrants across host countries has also tended to increase. This was the case, for example, for nationals from the former Yugoslavia who are long-term residents in Germany, Austria and Switzerland, and more recently, in Italy and the Scandinavian countries. Moroccan citizens first arrived in France, then went to Belgium and the Netherlands and, more recently, have emigrated to Italy and Spain. Chinese nationals were present in a greater number of OECD Member countries.

... which registered important changes in the countries of origin of their migrants

In 2000 and 2001, the growth of employment-related migration and family reunification flows has continued. Illegal immigration has also persisted

In 2000 and, on the basis of the data available, in 2001, the growth of inflows continued in many OECD countries, most particularly in the United States, Canada, Australia, Japan and southern Europe. Employment-related migration (and especially that of skilled temporary workers) continued to increase. This was also true for asylum flows and inflows related to family reunification. The persistence of illegal immigration underscores the difficulties faced by host and sending countries in controlling migration flows. In 2002, most OECD countries were not able to avoid an economic slowdown, resulting from the downturn in the advanced technology sectors and the consequences of the September 11 terrorist attacks in the United States. It is nonetheless difficult to measure the impact of these events on international mobility and to predict whether there will be an eventual reversal of migration flows.

The management of migration flows and cooperation with sending countries remain a high priority in migration policy...

Every type of migration policy has been implemented during the past two years. OECD countries have adopted a more restrictive attitude towards the entry and residence of foreigners and some countries have tightened requirements for family reunification procedures (*e.g.*, Austria, Denmark, the Netherlands). These policies were enacted in parallel with those giving more importance to selection procedures for new immigrants, especially to those for skilled workers (*e.g.*, in the settlement countries as well as in the United Kingdom, France and Norway). Measures to accelerate the processing of asylum applications and to discourage clearly unfounded applications have gained in importance. The fight against illegal immigration and the illegal employment of foreigners has been reinforced on two fronts: firstly, with tighter border controls, workplace inspections and identity checks within countries. Secondly, measures involving international co-operation with sending countries were undertaken to provide for their readmission of illegal immigrants. In some cases, these were strengthened with new bilateral labour agreements. At the same time in some Member countries, regularisation programmes have included not only undocumented migrant workers (*e.g.*, Greece, Italy, Portugal, Spain), but also their family members (*e.g.*, the United States) and rejected asylum seekers who are long-term residents and/or difficult to deport (*e.g.*, Switzerland, Luxembourg). The integration of immigrants and foreigners remains a major issue for most OECD Member countries.

... alongside the integration of immigrants in the society and labour market of the host country.

This year's report pays particular attention to this question of socio-economic integration, especially throughout the first section with a series of specific boxes. These boxes shed light on the linguistic competencies of newly arrived immigrants and the determining role of their command of the host country's language on their labour market integration. Other boxes address the school performance of foreign children and children of foreign background; the employment situation of young migrants and the need to improve their professional skills; and urban revitalisation of declining neighbourhoods, where many migrants are concentrated. The section also examines the fight against racism and discrimination in housing and hiring practices (which mostly penalise young migrants) as well as the situation of aging migrants and the institutional and economic difficulties some of them face upon retirement. Finally, in several OECD Member countries, the increase in inflows of non-accompanied minors raises additional questions regarding the management of migration flows. These cases constitute serious humanitarian emergencies and

require the countries affected to create special reception centres and allocate additional resources to care for these children temporarily, while deciding either to accept them into the community or help them return to their home country.

The second section of this report presents a survey of recent studies on labour shortages and the role of migration in attenuating this situation. Economic growth in the late 1990s, coupled with increasing concerns about aging populations, led many Member countries to envision using migration to ease labour shortages. While untapped resident labour reserves exist, they vary in size from country to country. Moreover, it is not clear whether these reserves can meet the immediate needs of the labour markets concerned and evidence shows that they cannot be mobilised rapidly.

The special chapter of this year's report is devoted to labour shortages and the resort to immigration

This survey highlights the diversity of methods used by some OECD Member countries to evaluate current and future labour shortages. Even though workers with skills and qualifications linked to new technologies are scarce, especially in information and communication technologies, other shortages exist. Demographic changes, which have led to aging populations and the increase in related health care needs in most OECD countries, have affected the demand for social and medical personnel. Shortages have also been identified among teachers and professionals in the biomedical and food industries. Labour market tightness also exists for low-skilled jobs in agriculture, manufacturing, construction, catering, tourism and domestic services.

Available studies confirm the existence of labour market tightness, especially for skilled employment...

Faced with labour shortages that may reflect more structural issues, some countries are not necessarily considering an increase in foreign labour recruitment. Other countries, though, are emphasising solutions to labour shortages using larger scale selective labour immigration policies (even if only on a temporary basis) with the goal of obtaining more significant long-term benefits from migration.

... but not all OECD countries are necessarily considering an increase in labour-related migration

The report also shows that immigration alone will not resolve labour market failures, given the fact that selective labour migration policies present limited solutions. Recommendations include: encouraging and pursuing current efforts to make use of underutilised resident labour supplies; examining more effectively sectoral and regional labour market needs; and continuing to study the long-term consequences of an increase in labour-related migration.

It is important to prepare and train current and future generations since immigration solutions have their limits

The third part of this report includes country notes on the recent developments in migration flows and policies.