

## Foreword

Few phenomena have shaped human history as decisively as migration. Its influence is evident in our vibrant, multi-ethnic societies – ever-present reminders of the power of the human urge to seek a better life elsewhere. Immigration brings new ideas, new energy, new connections that are reflected in our daily lives in thousands of ways – we eat Italian pizzas, Indian curries and Japanese sushi, we shop in late-night corner stores run by hard-working immigrants, and many of us work for or interact daily with businesses created by migrants of great vision and energy.

But migration brings challenges, too. In many societies, not all newcomers have managed to integrate successfully. Children may struggle in school, parents may not find work or may do jobs that do not make best use of their skills, and whole families and communities may live on the edge of the social mainstream. With recession gripping on the world economy, these problems are likely only to grow. Immigrants are at particular risk of losing their jobs during downturns and, even when economies do recover, their job prospects tend to be worse than those of natives.

For OECD members, these issues are of special concern. Net migration to OECD countries has tripled since the 1960s and – even with the economic slowdown – is likely to continue at a strong pace in the years to come. Indeed, as populations age in OECD countries in the coming decades, we are likely to call on migrants to play an even bigger role in our societies, although of course we cannot expect them to solve all the challenges we will face.

Challenges and benefits – migration brings them both. But we can only hope to minimise the former and maximise the latter if we adopt a coherent policy response. And we can only create that if we under-

stand the facts of migration – the reality rather than the rhetoric that all too often clouds debates on migration.

It is here that the OECD has a unique role to play. Our work on migration includes tracking migration movements and describing the size and characteristics of immigrant populations; examining how young immigrants are doing in education and investigating ways to ensure they make the most of their abilities; investigating the integration of immigrants in the workforce; and seeking to ensure that migration benefits both developed and developing countries.

This work forms the backbone of *OECD Insights: International Migration*, which, like the rest of this series, aims to generate informed debate on key issues facing our societies. The drama and distortions that surround discussions of migration (influenced in large part by the persistence of irregular immigration) make the need for rational dialogue on this issue especially pressing. Without such dialogue, our societies will fail to build support for comprehensive policies that make the best of international migration – for the migrants themselves, for the societies in which they come to live and for those they leave behind.

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A Gooch', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.