At the beginning of the new millennium, migration for employment and the reinforcement of international co-operation with a view to better control of migration flows remains an issue of utmost concern among the majority of OECD Member countries. Migration policies are increasingly incorporated in the context of a global approach to the monitoring of regular and irregular flows in partnership with the sending countries, not only with the intention of meeting the diverse and changing needs of the host countries, but also to take into account the interests of the country of origin and the migrants themselves. The diversity of immigrants’ origins as well as the channels they take, together with the growing movement of temporary and qualified workers in overall flows, indicates that migration plays an active part in the process of the globalisation of economies. It remains to be defined in a more precise manner how to adapt policies in order to increase co-operation between sending and host countries in order to better manage migration flows and to develop human resources at both ends of the migration chain.

The upturn in the trend in immigration which began in 1997 has been confirmed in several OECD Member countries. If the increase in asylum seekers has contributed to swelling the flow of migration, the new entries of immigrant workers are of increasing importance, to the same extent as reuniting families. A second characteristic feature of recent trends is the greater diversity of the immigrants’ country of origin. Over and above the traditional migration flows resulting from geographical proximity and historical links with the host country, destinations are increasingly diverse. For example, a growing number of immigrants from Asia to Europe; a greater number of nationals from the African continent, from some Central and Latin American countries as well as from Central and Eastern Europe decide to migrate towards the major countries of settlement (Australia, United States and Canada) and to European OECD countries in which their ethnic communities were, until quite recently, poorly represented.

Better employment prospects, easing of entry conditions for certain categories of workers had the effect of significantly increasing migration of qualified and highly qualified workers between 1999 and 2000. Recent recruitment policies have tended to converge in this direction seeking an increasing number of temporary foreign workers. Countries which were already relying on this source of temporary entry (i.e. the majority of European OECD countries) have granted temporary work permits valid for up to five years and generally renewable. This represents a reversal of past common practises which limited the period of validity of all initial work permits to one year (renewable). Settlement countries, whose migration policies were principally aimed at permanent immigrants, are now
increasingly favouring temporary migrant labour, in offering residence and work permits of a duration which can, depending on the country, cover a period of three to six years.

This trend, common to several Member countries, results for the most part in a reversal of the situation, provoked by the development of new technologies. The effect, in the majority of OECD countries, has been to generate qualified labour shortages most notably in the information and communication sectors. Simultaneously, population ageing has structurally affected supply and demand of certain jobs such as home cleaning services, the health sector or that of education which has incited specific labour needs in certain countries. Simple and rapid selection procedures have enabled countries to fall back on qualified workers in order to cope with labour market needs. Certain European OECD countries have, for example, adapted their legislation to offer particularly attractive conditions to immigrants: prolongation of the duration of the initial work permit, possibility of non-wage benefits and access to the labour market of family members.

The control of flows remains a priority of migration policies...

The revival of migration for employment goes hand in hand with the mobilisation of OECD countries to better control migration flows and to effectively combat irregular migration and the illegal employment of foreigners. The reinforcement of border and in-country controls, tougher sanctions against illegal employment of foreigners, the harmonisation of admission procedures concerning asylum seekers and refugees illustrate that the management of flows remains the highest priority of migration policies as a whole. The terrorist attacks of 11th September 2001 in the United States will probably further induce OECD Member countries to implement new measures to combat terrorism. These already include a stricter surveillance of transborder movements and reinforcement of detection measures for false identity papers and residence permits. These controls, aimed at dismantling networks of smugglers and the exploitation of human beings, could by the same token contribute to the reduction of irregular migration.

The integration of immigrants and foreigners remains a subject of major concern in many OECD countries. This situation is of particular relevance with regard to the most vulnerable groups and especially young people, women and refugees. More generally, even if conditions of insertion of immigrants and foreigners into the labour market improved with the economic recovery in the OECD area at the end of the 1990s, conditions remain somewhat precarious in certain countries. The recent reversal of the economic situation and the threat of a recession predicted for 2002 may have a negative impact on the employment of foreigners. Most OECD countries have implemented measures to assist immigrants in attaining or improving their knowledge of the language of the host country as well as their professional qualifications. Particular attention has also been devoted to the renovation of distressed urban areas, as well as to the fight against racism and discrimination in access to housing and the labour market.

... as well as the integration of immigrants in society and in the labour market, especially since the economic outlook for 2002 appears less favourable

... most notably in the sector of information and communication technology, health and education
General Introduction

Part II of this report presents a comparative analysis of international student mobility. This mobility is constantly rising, although it varies from one OECD country to another, mainly due to the nature and range of educational provision and the characteristics of the demand and expectations of foreign students. Student migration is greater the higher the level of education, degree of technical content of the field and the need to master foreign languages. OECD countries whose native language is more widely used internationally attract a larger number of students. The directions of student migration are also governed by geographical, institutional (especially if they originate from one of the member countries of a regional economic group such as the European Union or NAFTA) and academic considerations (centres of excellence).

The growing internationalisation of education systems offers many advantages to host countries, for example, the potential reserve of qualified workers constituted by the presence of foreign students could alleviate labour shortages. A number of OECD Member countries have introduced important modifications concerning the possibility of changes in the status and access to the labour market for foreign students who have completed their studies. From the point of view of the countries of origin, the potential gains related to this mobility are important, notably the development of human capital and the transfer of technology, as well as the strengthening of cultural and commercial ties.

Bearing in mind the many advantages offered by student migration, for them personally, for their countries of origin and the host countries, the report encourages this type of mobility which could be increased by more transparent procedures for equivalence of degrees or simplified conditions for obtaining student residence permits. A recommendation is also made to introduce safeguards to limit the risk of brain drain, for example, making available a greater number of student grants to promote mobility, conditional on return to the home country. Finally, greater co-operation between students’ countries of origin and destination would lead to a more equitable sharing of the advantages linked to international student mobility.

***

Part III presents country-specific notes on the recent developments in migration movements and policies.