

## Trends in International Migration: SOPEMI - 2004 Edition

*Summary in English*

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### GENERAL INTRODUCTION

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*While international migration has taken on a new significance, data in the phenomenon are partial and imperfect.*

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Although the issue of international migration has taken on a new significance in the context of ageing populations and of the increasing globalisation of national economies, migration statistics, regrettably, continue to be partial and imperfect. There are several reasons for this. They include constraints arising from institutional factors related to the collection of statistics (from population registers or censuses, residence and work permits or household surveys, depending upon the country concerned), differences in permit durations across countries for migration movements of the same types and the different policy approaches to migration (whether immigration is to be temporary or permanent, how easy or difficult it is to be naturalised, whether a change of status is possible during the course of a migrant's stay, etc.).

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*To help remedy this, the OECD has just compiled a new data base...*

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More precise and up-to-date statistics can contribute to the development and implementation of immigration and integration policies which are better suited to current geopolitical, demographic, economic and social realities. The development of specific studies, notably through surveys, in particular longitudinal surveys, and the improvement of the comparability of international migration statistics, present major challenges. In this context, the 2004 annual OECD report *Trends in International Migration* makes a significant contribution in presenting the results of a new database on the immigrant stock and in giving an update, through a series of boxes, on the major issues and challenges associated with measuring migration phenomena.

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*... which focuses on the foreign-born by country of residence and country of birth.*

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The main settlement countries of the OECD (Australia, Canada, the United States and New Zealand) publish statistics on immigrants (the foreign-born) while the European and Asian OECD countries use instead the concept of foreigner (a criterion based on nationality). This difference is symptomatic of the difficulties in harmonising migration statistics. For the first time, this edition of *Trends in International Migration* focuses on foreign-born persons and presents comparable statistics for them by country of residence and country of birth, for 29 OECD member countries. Thanks to this information, it is possible to provide a detailed and reliable picture comparing immigrant populations in OECD member countries and to assess the cumulative results of movements within and into the OECD area over the course of the past decades.

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*Other issues relating to migration statistics are also discussed.*

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The problems of comparability which are the most difficult to resolve are those which relate to flow statistics and those which concern certain specific migrant populations, such as asylum seekers, students and undocumented migrants. These questions are discussed in a series of boxes throughout the first section of this report. They have, as a common theme, the measurement of migration statistics and the challenges this presents. The following questions are discussed: *i)* How are migration flows measured? *ii)* Are asylum seekers really migrants? *iii)* How is the immigrant population measured? *iv)* How is net migration measured? *v)* Is it appropriate to compare the unemployment rate of foreigners with that of nationals? *vi)* How many illegal migrants are there? *vii)* How many foreigners obtain the nationality of their host country? From the information in these boxes, it is possible to draw up an inventory of the methods and practices used in describing and analysing the characteristics of migrants and to suggest some possible avenues of research to refine our understanding of the phenomenon of migration.

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*The special chapter provides, for the first time, an estimate of the numbers of immigrants and of expatriates by country of origin and level of education.*

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The special chapter “Counting immigrants and expatriates in OECD member countries: a new perspective” supplies estimates of the number of expatriates by country of origin (both member and non-member countries) and provides a better understanding of the much discussed issue of the international mobility of highly skilled workers and its impact on their countries of origin, in other words, the “brain drain” debate. The results of the analysis undertaken in the chapter show that *i*) the percentage of those born abroad in European OECD member countries is markedly higher than that of foreigners living in these countries (Germany, Sweden and Austria); *ii*) international migration tends to be more common among highly skilled workers; *iii*) in most OECD member countries, the number of immigrants with a tertiary level of education exceeds the number of emigrants with the same level of education; and *iv*) amongst non-member countries, it is small countries and less developed countries, notably in Africa and in the Caribbean, which are particularly affected by the international mobility of highly skilled workers.

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*The report also underlines a recent trend towards the stabilisation of migration flows...*

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As each year, the current report analyses trends in migration movements and policies. After several years of increase, international migration towards OECD member countries has shown a tendency to stabilise in 2002-2003. Flows of asylum seekers have greatly diminished, for example, into the United Kingdom or the Netherlands, and the same is true of family reunion migration in certain OECD countries (for example, in Denmark). On the other hand, migration for work purposes, notably skilled workers, accounts for a growing share of the international movement of people. The growth in the entry of foreign students, for example to Australia and France, and of seasonal workers, notably to Germany and to the United Kingdom, is part of the same development.

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*... and the importance of nationals from China and Russia in the recent flows.*

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Migration from nearby countries and that resulting from traditional historic links between countries are predominant. The report also emphasises the importance of certain nationalities and, in particular, analyses recent flows of migrants from China and Russia. Completing the overview is an analysis of four regions: *i*) the countries of Central and Eastern Europe in the context of their accession to the European Union, *ii*) East and Southeast Asia, *iii*) South America, and *iv*) sub-Saharan Africa.

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*The share of foreigners in the working population is increasing but women and young people face difficulties in integrating into the labour market...*

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An examination of the labour markets of OECD member countries indicates that in most of them, the share of foreigners and immigrants in the labour force continues to increase, a trend that was not affected by the recent economic downswing. The report also analyses the participation rates of foreigners and the main factors affecting them. This analysis highlights the nature and seriousness of difficulties faced by immigrants, particularly women and young people, in integrating fully into the labour market.

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*... despite new measures aimed at assisting them in doing this.*

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This report also presents an inventory of the principal migration policies adopted by OECD member countries. Several countries have taken new measures aimed at assisting the integration of foreigners and immigrants into their societies. These can be summarised under the formula “information, incentives, sanctions”. Measures taken by member countries include the establishment of observatories related to the integration of immigrants (for example, in France and Portugal), the reform of integration programmes for new arrivals (the Netherlands, Norway and Canada), and the reinforcement of measures to fight against discrimination (see, in particular, the new Directives of the European Union). Member countries also take the view that improving the control of immigration flows will allow them to improve the living and stay conditions of legal migrants.

The report also includes country notes, describing in detail recent developments in migration movements and policies. The statistical annex at the end of the publication contains statistics on flows, on the number of immigrants and foreigners, and on naturalisations.

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