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Report Shows Immigration Flows Rising in Many OECD Countries

Immigration flows continue to increase in many OECD countries, notably European countries and Japan. Conversely, however, immigration is tending to decline in Australia, Canada, Germany, Switzerland and the United States. Germany and the U.S. nevertheless remain the principal receiving countries in absolute terms.

In most OECD countries, both the number of foreigners and foreign-born inhabitants and their share in the total population have increased in the last decade. Between 1988 and 1998, the share of foreigners in Finland's population multiplied by four, although their absolute number remains low. In Austria, Denmark, Italy, Portugal and Spain the number of foreigners doubled in absolute terms, and in Germany it increased by 63%.

These and many other figures and international comparisons are found in the 2000 edition of the OECD annual report, **Trends in International Migration**. Although immigration is still mainly driven by family ties and predominantly concerns movements within a geographical region, there is a new trend towards increasing diversity. In the European Union, the number of non-EU foreigners is rising. Chinese immigrants now count among the top 10 nationalities settling in France, Italy and Spain. In the Nordic countries, immigration from neighbouring countries is gradually giving way to immigration by Asian nationals and citizens of the former Yugoslavia. Between 1998 and 1999, Belgium, Ireland and the United Kingdom experienced the most spectacular increase in asylum requests. In 1999, 91000 people sought asylum in the United Kingdom, which is comparable to the situation in Germany.

The distribution in Europe of nationals from the Maghreb countries (Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia), Turkey and the former Yugoslavia has changed in the last 15 years. Although France remains the main host country for Maghreb nationals, increasing numbers of Moroccans and Tunisians are settling in Italy, Spain and Germany**.** As a result of the conflict in the Balkans, the number of migrants from the former Yugoslavia increased in Switzerland, Austria and Italy**,** although Germany remains the largest receiving country. The Turkish population in Germany (2.1 million) remains the largest foreign community in a European OECD country, and accounts for almost 30% of the country's foreign residents. Turks have also migrated in large numbers to France, Belgium, the Netherlands and Denmark. In the latter two they represent 15% of the foreign population.

In Australia, Canada and the United States, immigration from Europe is declining, while immigration from Asian and developing countries is increasing. In Canada, the number of European immigrants fell slightly between 1986 and 1996 whereas the inflow of Asians doubled. The trend is similar in Australia where European immigration remained stable while the inflow from Asia, New Zealand and Africa has increased conspicuously.

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OECD Media Relations
General Inquiries: Tel. (33) 1 45 24 97 00 - Fax. (33)1 45 24 80 03/94 37 · **Research & Documentation:** Tel. (33) 1 45 24 80 88/80 89
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Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2 rue André-Pascal, 75775 Paris Cedex 16, France· Tel. (33) 1 45 24 82 00 - Fax. (33) 1 45 24 85 00
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Over the last decade, the proportion of foreigners in the labour force has increased significantly in several OECD countries, notably Austria, Belgium, Germany, Luxembourg and the United States. The share of foreigners in the overall labour force varies widely, however. At the high end of the range, it accounts for 57.7% in Luxembourg, 24.8% in Australia, 19.2% in Canada, 17.3% in Switzerland and 11.7% in the United States. By contrast, it ranges from 5% to 10% in Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, and Sweden. It amounts to less than 5% in the United Kingdom, Ireland, Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Italy, Spain and Japan.

Generally, employment levels among foreigners fluctuate more markedly than total employment levels. The recent economic upturns in Austria, Ireland, Italy, Norway and Portugal were accompanied by comparatively stronger growth in the employment of foreigners. In France, Germany and the Netherlands, by contrast, stronger economic growth appears to have been less favourable to foreigners. In almost all European OECD countries, except Italy and Spain, unemployment among foreign workers is higher than would be justified by their proportion of the work force. This discrepancy is largest in Denmark and the Netherlands, where on average unemployment among foreign workers is three times higher than among nationals.

If current buoyant economic conditions in OECD countries continue, migration flows are likely to increase further in the years to come. Some OECD countries have already taken steps towards a more flexible approach to temporary labour immigration, especially in high technology sectors, to promote the entry of high-skilled workers.

In addition, some analysts have suggested that immigration can alleviate problems posed by an ageing population. While an increased number of younger, more mobile immigrants could be a temporary solution, this study concludes that immigration on its own will not solve the demographics problem. A special chapter of this report presents a comparative study of family-linked immigration in a number of OECD countries. It examines the criteria, the beneficiaries and the effects of family reunion.

The full text of the report is available to journalists on the OECD's password-protected website. Journalists may also obtain a copy of the report from the OECD Media Relations Division (request by fax: 33 1 45 24 80 03 or news.contact@oecd.org).

For further information, journalists are invited to contact Jean-Pierre Garson in the Non-Member Economies and International Migration Division (tel: 33 1 45 24 91 74 or jean-pierre.garson@oecd.org).

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Table I.2. **Relative importance of the top 5 countries in the total immigration flows and stocks of foreigners in some OECD countries**

Main immigrants' countries of origin in 1998

Top 5 nationalities (according to the1998 volume ofinflows)	Inflows offoreigners in1998[1] % of total inflows (A)	Stocks offoreigners[2] in 1997 % oftotal stock of foreigners (B)	(A)/(B)	Top 5 nationalities (according tothe1998 volume ofinflows)	Inflows offoreigners in 1998 % of total inflows (A)	Stocks offoreigners in1997 % of total stock offoreigners (B)	(A)/(B)
Australia				**Germany**			
New Zealand	22.2	7.5	*3.0*	Poland	10.9	3.8	*2.8*
United Kingdom	10.4	27.4	*0.4*	Fed. Rep. of Yugoslavia	10.2	9.8	*1.0*
China	7.3	2.8	*2.6*	Turkey	8.0	28.6	*0.3*
South Africa	6.0	1.4	*4.2*	Italy	5.9	8.3	*0.7*
Philippines	3.9	2.4	*1.7*	Russian Federation	4.7	2.3	*2.0*
Total (in thousands)	*(84.1)*	*(3 908.3)*		*Total (in thousands)*	*(605.5)*	*(7 365.8)*	
Belgium				**Japan**			
France	14.6	11.5	*1.3*	China	21.0	17.0	*1.2*
Netherlands	12.3	9.1	*1.4*	Philippines	17.9	6.3	*2.8*
Morocco	8.5	14.7	*0.6*	United States	10.4	2.9	*3.5*
Germany	6.3	3.7	*1.7*	Brazil	8.3	15.7	*0.5*
United States	5.6	1.4	*4.0*	Korea	6.4	43.5	*0.1*
Total (in thousands)	*(50.7)*	*(903.2)*		*Total (in thousands)*	*(265.5)*	*(1 482.7)*	
Canada				**Netherlands**			
China	11.3	4.6	*2.4*	Morocco	6.5	20.0	*0.3*
India	8.8	4.7	*1.9*	Turkey	6.3	16.9	*0.4*
Philippines	4.7	3.7	*1.3*	Germany	5.8	7.9	*0.7*
Hong Kong (China)	4.6	4.8	*1.0*	United Kingdom	5.8	5.8	*1.0*
Pakistan	4.6	. .	..	United States	4.0	1.9	*2.1*
Total (in thousands)	*(174.1)*	*(4 971.1)*		*Total (in thousands)*	*(81.7)*	*(678.1)*	
Denmark				**Norway**			
Somalia	8.6	4.1	*2.1*	Sweden	22.4	11.0	*2.0*
Former Yugoslavia	7.1	13.5	*0.5*	Denmark	8.0	11.5	*0.7*
Iraq	6.3	3.4	*1.9*	United Kingdom	4.7	6.9	*0.7*
Germany	5.5	4.8	*1.2*	Germany	4.0	3.2	*1.3*
Norway	5.3	4.8	*1.1*	Somalia	4.0	. .	. .
Total (in thousands)	*(20.4)*	*(237.7)*		*Total (in thousands)*	*(26.7)*	*(157.5)*	
Finland				**Sweden**			
Former USSR	29.8	23.6	*1.3*	Iraq	15.1	4.5	*3.4*
Sweden	9.6	9.3	*1.0*	Finland	8.4	18.4	*0.5*
Estonia	8.1	12.0	*0.7*	Former Yugoslavia	5.4	6.1	*0.9*
Somalia	4.3	6.5	*0.7*	Norway	4.6	5.6	*0.8*
Iraq	3.2	3.0	*1.1*	Iran	4.1	4.8	*0.9*
Total (in thousands)	*(8.3)*	*(80.6)*		*Total (in thousands)*	*(35.7)*	*(552.0)*	
France				**United States**			
Algeria	14.3	16.4	*0.9*	Mexico	19.9	21.7	*0.9*
Morocco	13.8	16.9	*0.8*	China	5.6	2.7	*2.1*
Turkey	5.8	5.2	*1.1*	India	5.5	2.3	*2.4*
China	4.9	0.3	*17.0*	Philippines	5.2	4.6	*1.1*
Tunisia	4.6	6.3	*0.7*	Dominican Republic	3.1	1.8	*1.8*
Total (in thousands)	*(116.9)*	*(3 315.0)*		*Total (in thousands)*	*(660.5)*	*(19 767.3)*	

1. 1998 except for Australia (1999) and Denmark (1997).
2. Stocks offoreign-born population for Australia, Canada and theUnited States. 1996 for Australia, Canada and Denmark.
Sources: National Statistical Offices (see notes for Table A.1.1. at the end oftheStatistical Annex).

Table I.4. **European Union citizens in the foreign population of the 15 member countries, 1998**

Percentages

	Share of EU citizens		Share of EU labour force	
	In total foreign population (%)	In total population (%)	In foreign labour force (%)	In total labour force (%)
Austria	12.6	1.1	11.7	1.1
Belgium	57.0	4.7	68.7	5.4
Denmark	28.2	0.8	43.6	0.8
Finland	22.4	0.2	30.3	0.2
France	33.8	2.0	40.2	2.5
Germany	26.5	2.3	31.4	2.8
Greece	13.7	0.2	13.0	0.2
Ireland	75.2	2.0	79.2	2.4
Italy	21.3	0.1	21.3	0.1
Luxembourg	90.5	30.0	92.9	36.2
Netherlands	28.7	1.4	43.6	1.7
Portugal	53.7	0.3	50.7	0.2
Spain	41.2	0.3	36.1	0.3
Sweden	42.4	2.1	49.3	2.0
United Kingdom	40.4	1.4	44.5	1.6

Source: Labour Force Surveys (Eurostat).

Table I.5. **Foreign or foreign-born population and labour force in selected OECD countries**
Thousands and percentages

Foreign population and labour force

	Foreign population[1]				Foreign labour force[2]			
	Thousands		% oftotal population		Thousands		% of total labour force	
	1988[3]	1998[4]	1988	1998	1988[5]	1998[6]	1988	1998
Austria	344	737	*4.5*	*9.1*	161	327	*5.4*	*9.9*
Belgium	869	892	*8.8*	*8.7*	291	375	*7.2*	*8.8*
Denmark	142	256	*2.8*	*4.8*	65	94	*2.2*	*3.2*
Finland	19	85	*0.4*	*1.6*	..	35	..	. .
France	3 714	3 597	*6.8*	*6.3*	1557	1 587	*6.4*	*6.1*
Germany	4 489	7 320	*7.3*	*8.9*	1911	2 522	*7.0*	*9.1*
Ireland	82	111	*2.4*	*3.0*	35	48	*2.7*	*3.2*
Italy	645	1 250	*1.1*	*2.1*	285	332	*1.3*	*1.7*
Japan	941	1 512	*0.8*	*1.2*	86	119	*0.1*	*0.2*
Luxembourg	106	153	*27.4*	*35.6*	69[7]	135[7]	*39.9*	*57.7*
Netherlands	624	662	*4.2*	*4.2*	176	208	*3.0*	*2.9*
Norway	136	165	*3.2*	*3.7*	49[8]	67[8]	*2.3*	*3.0*
Portugal	95	178	*1.0*	*1.8*	46	89	*1.0*	*1.8*
Spain	360	720	*0.9*	*1.8*	58	191	*0.4*	*1.2*
Sweden	421	500	*5.0*	*5.6*	220	219	*4.9*	*5.1*
Switzerland	1 007	1 348	*15.2*	*19.0*	608[9]	691[9]	*16.7*	*17.3*
United Kingdom	1 821	2 207	*3.2*	*3.8*	871	1 039	*3.4*	*3.9*

Foreign-born population and labour force

	Foreign-born population[10]				Foreign-born labour force[10]			
	Thousands		% oftotal population		Thousands		% of total labour force	
	1991[11]	1998[12]	1991	1998	1991[11]	1998[12]	1991	1998
Australia	3 965	4 394	*22.9*	*23.4*	2 182	2 294	*25.7*	*24.8*
Canada	4 343	4 971	*16.1*	*17.4*	2 681	2 839	*18.5*	*19.2*
United States	19 767	26 300	*7.9*	*9.8*	11 565	16 100	*9.4*	*11.7*

1. Data are from population registers except for France (Census), Ireland and the United Kingdom (Labour Force Survey), Japan and Switzerland (register of foreigners) and Italy, Portugal and Spain (residence permits).
2. Data include the unemployed except for Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway and the United Kingdom. Data for Austria, Germany and Luxembourg are from Social Security registers, for Denmark and Norway from the register of population and the register of employees respectively. Data for Italy, Portugal, Spain and Switzerland are from residence or work permits. Figures for Japan and the Netherlands are estimates from national Statistical Offices. For the other countries, data are from Labour Force Surveys.
3. 1982 for France.
4. 1990 for France.
5. 1991 for Italy; 1989 for Belgium; 1992 for Japan.
6. 1995 for Italy; 1997 for Denmark, Germany and Netherlands.
7. Including cross-border workers.
8. Excluding the self-employed.
9. Number of foreigners with an annual residence permit or a settlement permit who engage in gainful activity. Seasonal and cross-border workers are not included.
10. Data are from censuses except for the United States in 1998 (estimates from the Current Population Survey) and for the Australian labour force (Labour Force Survey).
11. 1990 for the United States.
12. 1996 for Canada.
Sources: National Statistical Institutes.