INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION AND THE EUROPEAN UNION, TRENDS AND CONSEQUENCES

ABSTRACT. Member States of the European Union (EU) have undoubtedly changed into de facto countries of immigration. Since the upswing in migration in the late 1980s, net migration for the 15 EU Member States together has not been below 500,000. This article first focuses on trends in international migration (such as migration from former colonies, recruitment of temporary workers, and East-West migration) and special groups of immigrants (such as ethnic Germans, asylum seekers, and clandestine migrants). The second part of the article pays attention to immigrant settlement and migration policies, especially focusing on the European Union (trafficking and smuggling of humans, and the integration of migrants on the labour market). Detailed comparison of international migration flows is seriously hindered by a complexity of different national registration systems, and different countries display differences with regard to type and history of migration, country of origin, size of migration flows and immigrant populations.

KEY WORDS: asylum policies, immigrants, labour market, migration, statistics

INTRODUCTION

Europe changed from an area of emigration towards the New World into an area of immigration in the second half of the past century. Decolonisation, a temporary but massive need for low- and unskilled workers, wars and political suppression, the end of the Cold War, and the reunification of Germany, have led to a variety of migration movements towards and inside Europe (Muus 1993; Salt 1998; Coleman 1999). At the start of the new millennium the European migration debate is about the need for replacement migration given the rapidly ageing and declining populations, about the need for (highly-) skilled workers, about clandestine migration and the abuse of asylum, and about how to fight the trafficking of migrants. If we take a closer look at the individual 15 Member States of the European Union we witness a mosaic of migration movements and of resident immigrant populations, and a mosaic with a view to type and history of migration, country of origin, size of the migration flows and immigrant populations. This article will highlight some of the past and current trends in international migration towards European countries, and the develop-
INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION, TYPES AND TRENDS

A short definition of international migration is the movement of persons across national borders with the intention to settle in another country for a period of at least a year. Detailed international comparison of international migration flows is seriously hindered by a complexity of different national registration systems. Here we refer to the major trends and estimates given by EUROSTAT (1999, 2000) and the SOPEMI (Continuous reporting system on migration) system of the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 1999).

Figure 1 shows that international migration towards and from the current 15 Member States of the European Union has resulted in an annual net migration (immigration minus emigration) pattern, which shows important variations in time, but has been above 500,000 for the whole area since 1988. Behind these data we find a complexity of (national) patterns. The most important will be highlighted.