The banking profession has fairly structured career routes. Career ladders may be defined in collective agreements or can be organization-specific. Advancement may be formalized, though this usually applies to the lower levels of the occupation only. At managerial level, promotion operates more informally, and selection tends to be based on the discretion of senior management. Women predominate in the banking sector in Britain and Germany, but not in Spain. Despite these differences, career progression in banking is clearly differentiated by gender in all three countries. Women have found it particularly hard to progress within the traditionally male-dominated culture and organizational structure of this sector. European Union equal opportunities legislation influences some aspects of employment, such as recruitment policies and working hours. However, practice has shown that involvement by employers is often more of a lip-service than a true commitment. Although growing importance has been attributed to training in equal opportunities and codes of good practice, their effectiveness still has to be demonstrated, particularly in private sectors. In aspects such as attitudes and behaviour, changes are very difficult to introduce.

This chapter is organized into five sections. Section one provides an overview of the gender-ethnic composition of the workforce. Section two outlines the career structures and systems in Britain, Germany and Spain. These two sections are valuable in providing relevant contextual material for migrants’ experiences and the final analysis. Section three examines migrants’ experiences in regard to promotion and further training. In section four, I discuss the results within the context of career development systems and procedures, labour market situations, women’s position and the personal characteristics of migrants. In the final section, I pull together the various experiences of migrants in the
two occupational groups, and come to some conclusions on the opportunities and obstacles to migrants in achieving upward job mobility in another member state.

Profile of the workforce

Migrants’ career path will be influenced by the culture of the work environment. Female employment in the banking sector exceeds that of men in both Britain and Germany. The Spanish sector is still predominantly male. Women account for 65.9 per cent in Britain, 57.4 per cent in Germany, but for only 29 per cent in Spain. However, there are differences between the various banking sub-sectors within countries. Public banks and clearing banks are more feminized than private banks. For example, the survey by McDowell and Court found that the proportion of women in British merchant banking was just 41 per cent in mid-1990s. In Spain, female employees comprised 24.3 per cent in the savings bank sector and 18.5 per cent in the private sector, but 36.6 per cent in foreign banks in 1992 (Carresquer et al. 1996). The share of the foreign population is very small in all three countries. They are concentrated in foreign banks or in the international departments of private banks. For example, the percentage of foreigners in the German financial sector was only 1.2 per cent in 1997. About 37 per cent of foreigners come from EU countries, and the proportion of women amongst foreigners is also above that of men (Figge and Quack 1991).

Broadly speaking, women in European banking are concentrated in a small number of functions and in the lower grades, being mainly in assistance and operative tasks and virtually absent in leading or commercial functions such as stock exchange, securities, foreign operations (Jortay et al. 1991; Quack and Hancké 1997). A changing trend has

2. Employment in merchant banks makes up a small proportion of total banking employment. Figures of the British Bankers Association (1998) show that out of a total of 444,800 employees in 1998, the numbers employed by merchant banks was only 7,100 compared to 354,200 by retail banks.