

Migrant workers in Europe

How have foreign workers in Europe been affected by the economic recession that followed the 1973-74 oil crisis? The OECD has been monitoring the trends and its 1978 report (the sixth to be done by the SOPEMI agency) gives some idea of the situation up to early 1978.

The main OECD countries to employ migrant labour are the EEC countries (minus Italy, which is the biggest supplier, Denmark and Ireland), plus Austria, Switzerland and Sweden. Unfortunately Britain did not contribute to the 1978 report.

The main countries to supply foreign labour to those eight European "employers" are the six north Mediterranean countries (in order: Italy, Turkey, Yugoslavia, Portugal, Spain and Greece) which, in 1977, had five times as many nationals abroad in Europe as the three southern Mediterranean Maghreb countries (in order: Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia).

The main concentrations of foreign workers were of Turks and Yugoslavs in Germany and Portuguese and Algerians in France.

The most important fact to emerge from the report is that, over the 1973-77 period, while the total foreign populations in the eight principal host countries changed little, the percentage of the jobs taken by migrant workers fell by an average of more than 8%, to an average of 11% in 1977. In the biggest host countries (Germany, France and Switzerland) the average percentage of jobs taken by migrant workers fell by twice as much.

The fourth report (on 1976) defined the new model of intra-European migration as it emerged after several years of economic decline. It contained four main observations:

— The fact that the countries which traditionally welcome immigrants have stopped recruiting foreign workers

does not mean that all migration has stopped.

— Migrant workers still have a part to play in these countries and, when the governments stopped immigration, they tried to get the foreign workers on their territory better integrated, mainly by making it easier for them to be joined by their families.

— The foreign population therefore tends to increase, particularly since, demographically, it does not immediately fall in line with the population trends of the host country.

— The break in migratory patterns affected the established patterns of trade between the two groups of countries, and those which provided the migrants tend to be even less well placed than their partners to handle the employment crisis.

These observations, drawn from information collected by national correspondents, led the writers of the 1977 report to produce a document that differed from the previous ones. They put more emphasis on "stocks" of

migrant workers than on migratory "flow" and spent more time discussing second generation migrants, integration policies and new forms of relations between the two groups of countries. This report is similar. It attempts to come to grips with a changing situation that is increasingly difficult to describe in statistical and quantitative terms.

Since the report was first introduced, intra-European migration has decreased constantly to its present very small proportions. Relatively speaking, the downward trend seems to have levelled off. Although entries changed little in 1977 and 1978, exits (not necessarily people going home) from importing countries decreased. There were about 700 000 in 1977. This may partly explain the relative stabilization of stocks.

Table I is an updated version of data from all the annual reports and gives the figures for migrant workers in 1977. It has been stressed many times that these are estimates that should be viewed with caution. It would be wrong to try to make comparisons from one year to another and, worse, from one country to another. However, they do give a general idea of the situation.



Many Portuguese come to work in the Community countries. Soon this woman's child will no longer be an outsider but an EEC citizen

Table I — Migrant workers in 1977

	Austria	Belgium	France	Germany	Luxembourg	Netherlands	Sweden	Switzerland
Algeria	—	2 400	331 100	—	—	—	200	—
Austria	—	3 700	—	75 000	—	—	2 400	24 100
Finland	—	—	—	2 900	—	—	103 000	—
Greece	—	9 600	—	162 500	—	1 900	9 200	4 800
Italy	2 100	106 400	199 200	281 200	10 800	10 000	2 800	253 100
Morocco	—	22 200	152 300	15 200	—	29 200	600	—
Portugal	—	3 900	360 700	60 200	12 900	5 200	1 000	4 800
Spain	—	27 300	204 000	100 300	2 200	17 500	1 900	62 700
Tunisia	—	1 900	73 000	—	—	1 100	400	—
Turkey	27 000	17 000	31 200	517 500	—	42 400	4 200	14 900
Yugoslavia	131 000	—	42 200	377 200	600	8 000	25 800	25 400
Others	28 800	111 900	190 600	296 600	22 600	21 000	73 800	103 000
Total	188 900	306 300	1 584 300	1 888 600	49 100	115 300	225 300	492 800

Notes

Belgium — based on the April 77 census (1-13). Frontier workers are excluded.

France — result of the census (1-5). This figure is probably underestimated.

Germany — this includes the frontier workers.

Luxembourg — estimate by the Belgian correspondent.

Netherlands — holders of work permits.

Sweden — this includes resident workers who have expressed a desire to stay for six months or more.

Switzerland — established workers and those with one-year permits only (31.12.1977).

**Table II
Migrant workers from certain countries of immigration
working in other countries of immigration, 1977**

	Belgium	France	Switzerland	Germany	Switzerland	Germany
		excluding frontier workers			including frontier workers	
Belgian		19 900				9 200
French	41 200		37 000	(24 000)	(61 000)	43 600
German	9 900	22 900	46 000		(62 000)	
Dutch	26 800	5 000	4 200			42 700
Swiss		11 600				7 000
British	7 800	11 700	5 900			25 200

Note: The figures in brackets are estimates by the secretariat. The above figures should obviously be interpreted with care.

Table III — Migrant workers, 1974-1977 ('000)

	Austria	Belgium	France(1)	Germany	Luxembourg	Netherlands	Sweden	Switzerland
1974	218.0	278.0	1 900.0	2 360.0		163.4	200.0	593.0
1975	185.0	278.0	1 900.0	2 171.0	46.8	176.0	204.0	553.0
1976	171.7	316.8	1 584.3	1 937.1	46.8	140.5	235.5	516.0
1977	188.9	306.3	1 584.3	1 888.6	49.1	115.3	225.3	492.8

(1) The figures for 1974 and 1975 are the result of an extrapolation from a survey by the Ministry of Labour in October 1973. Those for 1976 and 1977 are estimates based on the 1975 census.

Note: These figures were taken from previous reports and should be used with caution. Those for the Netherlands have also been adjusted to exclude nationals from old Dutch territories. In order to ensure coherence with the data in Table I, the figures for Switzerland only cover established workers and those with annual work permits. If frontier (as on 31 December) and seasonal (as on 31 August) workers are also included, the following figures are obtained — 1974: 874.4, 1975: 723.8, 1976: 653.8 and 1977: 640.2.

It seemed useful to complete tables I, II and III to show how large a percentage of the working population is made up of migrant workers and how this percentage has developed since the crisis began.

The absolute figures make it clear that the main drop in numbers was in countries which had the largest work forces in 1960-70. This confirms how big an effect the crisis had on these workers.

We should add that, although at first migrant workers seemed less affected by unemployment than nationals, the situation has now reversed and seems to be deteriorating. This is not surprising, bearing in mind that there is a large contingent of migrant workers in the lower age groups, which are the first to feel the effects of a drop in employment.



Construction and other manual and sometimes menial jobs are often taken by foreign workers

	Migrant workers as % of total working population, 1977	Change over 1974-1977 period
Austria	6	- 13
Germany	9.5	- 19
Belgium	8.4	+ 10.5
France	7.3 (1975)	- 16
Luxembourg	32	+ 5
Netherlands	3.7	- 29
Sweden	5.4	+ 12
Switzerland	16.4	- 17

Although migrant employment as a percentage of the working population has decreased, the total migrant population has grown or changed little since 1973. Switzerland, with a decrease of slightly more than 11%, is the only exception. This trend would seem to reflect a certain political desire mentioned in previous reports. While governments in the importing countries have confirmed their decisions to halt entry of first generation immigrants, they are trying to get those already there to settle, in particular by allowing them to bring in their families, a *sine qua non* of integration. The decision to

stop immigration may help stabilize or even increase the number of migrants, as it affects the behaviour of the people mainly concerned: the employer will hesitate to send a migrant worker back home, as he will not be able to recuperate him if the need arises, and the worker himself will hesitate to leave and see what develops, rightly fearing that he will never come back.

To be truthful, we do not know how many migrants do return, and what few figures we have (see the report on the migratory chain, July 1978) should be viewed with caution. Many migrants from rural areas or from the services sector may be counted as working by their own authorities once they have a job, or are unemployed even, in the host country. It is not sure whether they keep this status when they go home and, obviously, they are not always recorded as unemployed when they do go back.

The cash which migrant workers sent home in 1977 reached almost \$7 500

million. Account must also be taken of the fact that, in some cases, the migrants probably preferred to keep their savings in a currency other than that of their country of origin because of the fluctuating monetary situation. They send as much money home as they did before the crisis and these amounts play an important part in the balance of payments in their home countries. Will this trend be maintained in the coming years once the migrant population stops changing and the drive to integrate foreigners into the host countries has taken effect?

This year, correspondents in the countries of emigration were invited to supply details of both the situation in their countries and the steps taken or planned to handle it. As the Kindleberger report showed in its analysis of the relation between migration, growth and development, measures of this kind will inevitably be of limited scope unless they are part of development strategies that involve international cooperation.

	Germany	Belgium	France	Netherlands	Sweden	Switzerland
1973	3 966.2	774.8	3 873.1	282.5	397.5	1 052.5
1974	4 127.4	805.4	4 038.2	315.1	401.2	1 064.5
1975	4 089.6	835.4	4 106.0	344.9	409.9	1 012.7
1976	3 948.3	851.6	4 205.3	362.5	418.0	958.6
1977	3 948.3	869.7	4 237.0	n.a.	424.0	932.7

The report in fact contains a section on the policies the countries of immigration have introduced, with the cooperation of their partners, to link the return of migrants to their home countries with the development of these countries. But the section is a

short one, clearly reflecting the difficulties encountered and the limited scope of the usually one-off and experimental measures that are devised in a liberal manner. But they should be encouraged, as being the only measures to tackle the real question. How is it

possible to encourage migrants to go home if the partners involved in the old migratory exchange have not begun to solve the problems (lack of employment and/or inadequate income) that caused them to leave in the first place? □

Migrant workers: time to tackle their problem⁽¹⁾

Draw up a list of the dozen most dangerous or dirtiest jobs and the chances are you will find most of them being filled by immigrant workers from outside the Community.

The immigrants, in addition, generally have to work unsocial hours; they are badly paid and they are the first to be made redundant in times of recession.

They live mainly in ghettos, they are exploited by employers and landlords and are sometimes harassed by the police. Their problems multiply if they have entered the Community illegally.

These workmen, mainly from North Africa, Spain, Portugal, Yugoslavia, Turkey and Greece, have all come to West Europe in recent years to toil at some of the most demanding jobs that frequently are the backbone of industrialized economies.

They come because job opportunities at home are limited, because there were vacancies in Europe and because they hope to make enough to feed their families at home or to enable their children to acquire a higher education in the West.

These third country migrant workers, as they have been called, number about six million and represent some 5% of the labour force in the European Community countries. The families that also joined these workers in Europe bring the total of foreign residents to some 12.5 million.

The fact that their conditions of residence still vary from one Community country to another is a problem that the European Commission in Brussels would like to discuss and if possible to change so that national laws and situations are more identical.

Recruiting of foreign workers has virtually ceased and the experts feel that now may be the best time to try

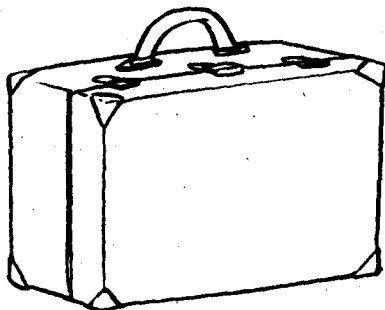
and achieve some general Community-wide policies in this field.

In a few years, the situation will be further complicated by the fact that Greece, Portugal and Spain—three traditional places of origin for foreign workers—will be entering the Community and will be on the way to acquiring unlimited access to all nine member states.

This would cause additional pressures on the already tense industrial labour situation in the Community, where there are currently six million—ironically equal to the number of third country migrant workers—unemployed.

European Commission vice-president Henk Vredeling, who is in charge of social and employment affairs, observed in a London speech recently that "the distorted development brought about by the uncontrolled migration of the 50s and 60s faces society with serious consequences..."

But he adds that, currently, "we have a breathing space which will enable us to consider the situation and lay down a new line of approach".



What is being sought is a joint policy on problems connected with foreign workers and their families. This approach would cover such matters as the training of migrant workers returning to their homeland, illegal entry and employment in the Community, the resumption of

recruiting from outside the Community when the economies of some member states make it necessary, the re-unification of families in the host country, and a number of other questions involving international treaties and accords.

In addition, the Commission has proposed five principles that should be considered during these discussions. They are: the need to ensure equality of treatment for work from third countries who live regularly in the Community, the need to provide for the professional development of members of their families, the requirement that trade unions and employers be included in social policy negotiations, the prevention of illegal immigration and punishment of those who encourage it, and the need to consider the policies of member states if there is a resumption of recruitment of workers from outside the Community.

What these negotiations would lead us on would be ways of unifying policies of the Nine on a number of specific legal and social areas. This would range from the conditions of entry and stay in a Community country to the welfare of the migrants, their families, including social security, housing, health and training.

Another related issue which should also be examined at the same time would be possible problems incurred by citizens of Community countries and their families who live and work in non-Community countries.

In discussing the need to work out an organized system of dealing with the issues, commissioner Vredeling has warned against the simple-minded reaction that would resolve the unemployment problem in the Community by simply throwing out the foreign workers.

He emphasized that the right of free movement granted by the Community at its creation was economically necessary and the "fulfillment of a great ideal" of opening national frontiers.

It should also not be forgotten, added, that foreign workers have been continuing to contribute "keeping our production going and powering our standard of living"

(1) From Euroforum.