International Migration Policies: An Overview

Population Division
Department of Economic and Social Affairs
United Nations

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Introduction

Substantial changes in government perceptions of migration trends took place in the second half of 1970s and the early 1980s.

Migration has become prominent in the national and international agenda since the 1990s.
OUTLINE

**Emigration policies**
- Overall emigration
- Return migration
- Regional and sub-regional harmonization

**Immigration policies**

- Regulation of the number and type of migration
  - Overall immigration levels
    - Skilled migration
    - Low-skilled migration
    - Family reunification
    - Undocumented migration

- Formulation of policies to influence the conditions of migrants within a country
  - Integration of non nationals
  - Regularization programmes
    (linguistic and vocational training, easier acquisition of citizenship)
Immigration Policies

Overall immigration levels

Views: Since 1986, about one-fifth of countries view the level of immigration as too high.

- In 2003, more than one-third of countries report policies designed to change migration from its current level; among them, one-third want to lower immigration and 5 per cent want to raise it.

- This contrasts with 1976 when only 7 per cent of countries want to lower immigration and another 7 per cent wanted to raise immigration.
Growing number of countries are promoting the migration of skilled workers; at the same time that increasing restrictiveness towards overall migration in receiving countries is becoming common.

A number of receiving countries have enacted legislation placing greater emphasis on migrants skills. For example:

- Germany (2000 Green Card Initiative)
- United Kingdom (2002 Highly Skilled Migration Programme)
- United States (2000 H1-B visas)
- Bilateral agreements (skilled and unskilled migrants)
  - Germany-Poland
  - Italy-Tunisia
  - Spain-Morocco

New trends within OECD countries to encourage the international migration of highly skilled workers.
Low-skilled migration

- Number of countries are experiencing labour shortages in low skilled fields due to population ageing and rising jobs expectations (agriculture, construction, domestic services)
- Several countries have responded to these labour gaps by tolerating undocumented migration and visa overstayers.
- Countries have signed bilateral agreements to recruit foreign workers. For example, countries of Southern Europe signed bilateral agreements with Poland, Romania and Ukraine.
Family reunification

- For a number of countries, family reunification is the predominant mode of entry.
- Most countries of immigration accept some migrants on the ground of family reunification; some countries give it preference.
Integration of non-nationals

- Increasing number of countries (61) have programmes to integrate non-nationals in 2003. Those programmes are found mainly in the more developed countries:
  - Linguistic and vocational training
  - Easier acquisition of citizenship
  - Recognition of dual citizenship
Undocumented migration

- Countries clamping down on undocumented migration (including trafficking/smuggling)
- Undocumented migration is increasing and is a major concern in almost all receiving countries. This translates into:
  - Extension of legal competencies
  - More stringent requirements for visa issuance;
  - Tighter border security (e.g. fingerprinting and photograph); increased use of technological measures;
  - Regularization programmes
  - Bilateral agreements for readmission
    - Poland-Russian Federation
    - Ireland-Nigeria
    - Spain-Colombia, Dominican Republic
    - Spain-Morocco (nationals and those transiting)
Regional and subregional harmonization

- Harmonization of immigration policies among governments has facilitated information exchange and improved regional cooperation. Consultative processes have been established at regional and international level to stem the flow of undocumented migrants;
  - Bali Ministerial agreement on People Smuggling
  - Puebla process (Belize, Canada, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama and the United States.)
International Initiatives

- **International instruments:**
  - Migrant worker convention 1990 (entered into force on 1/7/2003)

- Report of the Secretary-General on Strengthening the United Nations: An Agenda for Change

- **United Nations General Assembly**
  - Report of Secretary-General on international migration and development
  - Resolution of 23 December 2003 calling for High Level Dialogue in 2006 on international migration and development

Emigration Policies

Sending countries:

- Despite increasing volume of migration, percentage of countries aiming to lower emigration remains at one-quarter since 1980s.
  - South Africa-United Kingdom (U.K agrees not recruit health professionals from South Africa)

- Eleven countries seek to raise emigration
  - Government units to manage migration
    - Bangladesh, India, Philippines

- Countries less inclined to encourage return migration.

- Establishing linkage programmes with nationals abroad El Salvador, Mexico, Morocco.

- Recognizing dual citizenship
Government Emigration Policies

Year

- 1976
- 1986
- 1996
- 2003

Percentage of countries

- Raise
- Maintain/ No intervention
- Lower

Graph showing the percentage of countries with different emigration policies from 1976 to 2003.
Conclusions

- Migration will remain at forefront of national and international agendas for foreseeable future
  - With low fertility and population ageing, immigration needed to fill labour shortages, forestall population decline, sustain economic growth

For sending countries, migration major source of foreign exchange from remittances ($75 billion)

Making migration work for all countries, while respecting rights and responsibilities of migrants is a major challenge and opportunity
“Only through cooperation can we build partnerships, make migration a driver of development, fight smugglers and traffickers and agree on standards for the treatment of migrants and the management of migration.”

Address of Secretary-General to the European Parliament upon receipt of the Andrei Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought, 29 January 2004.