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Migration Policy Development

Civic Stratification, Gender and Family Migration

Policies in Europe

Paper presented at the IMISCOE Cluster B3 Workshop
Budapest, 31 May - June 2006

Eleonore Kofman
Middlesex University, UK

Albert Kraler
ICMPD, Vienna

Content

Introduction

Though to varying degrees, family-related migration has been the dominant mode of legal entry into European Union states for the past two decades. As can be seen in the table of different forms of permanent and long-term migration in selected OECD states (Appendix 1), family migration constitutes over half of these flows in a number of European states, and particularly those where labour migration is relatively low (France, Norway and Sweden) or where refugees constitute a very low proportion of long-term immigration. Even in countries with high and increasing levels of labour migration as in the UK, family migration also increases in absolute numbers. So too have increasing refugee numbers contributed to higher levels of family reunification.

In much of Europe, family-related forms of migration have become more important after the stop in recruitment and increasing restrictions placed on labour migration in the wake of the oil crisis of 1973. Although family-related migration came to dominate migration flows to Europe only after the recruitment stop, migrants recruited for employment purposes in the preceding decades had frequently also brought in their families, despite the underlying philosophy of the "guest worker regimes" which was based on the assumption of temporary, rotating migration involving single, male migrants. Migrations from colonial countries to France, the Netherlands and the UK tended to include more family members than in the guest worker regimes. However, women also migrated independently as workers, sometimes jointly going through recruitment processes with their husbands or forming families later on. What distinguishes labour migrants from those admitted for family- related reasons is that they were admitted independently and by and large had superior rights than those legally entering as family members and dependants.

Despite the official philosophy underlying "guestworker policies", policy makers in continental recruiting countries were aware of ongoing processes of settlement and related processes of family reunion and formation, but simply acquiesced to that fact without changing policy (Abadan-Unat 2005; see on Germany Schönwelder 2001). By the 1980s, rights to family reunification and family formation had been progressively expanded and entrenched in immigration legislation, often after successful challenges of administrative decisions before national courts or the European Court of Human Rights (Lahav 1997). By contrast, family migration policies stood at the centre of public controversies surrounding immigration in the UK and successive UK governments consciously followed policies aimed at curbing immigration of family members of settled migrants and citizens as part of wider policies aimed at restricting immigration from the New Commonwealth and in so doing, accepted overt discrimination on the basis of sex and race (Bhabha and Shutter 1994). At this time men could bring in foreign-born wives, whom it was assumed were dependants and therefore did not work. Giving equal rights to women and men as a result of a 1985 European Convention of Human Rights judgement simply meant a levelling down where British men lost their right to bring in foreign-born wives (Klug 1989). And it was only in the 1980s that a number of other discriminatory regulations affecting family migrants most strongly were lifted, such as the women's right to

transmit citizenship to one's children which was not remedied until the 1980s in the Netherlands and the UK.

In the current context, family migration derives its political significance from the fact that family-related modes of entry have become one of the main, and in many countries, virtually the only legal means (apart from asylum and certain highly skilled categories[1]) to find admission. It is these processes of family migration tied to family- related modes of entry that are the focus of this paper. In the following sections we firstly outline the different forms of family migrations. Secondly we examine changing attitudes and conditions regulating family in the context of the development of managed migration systems. Thirdly, we analyse the development of stratified rights in relation to family migrations and their implications for a system of civic stratification in EU states. We illustrate this with reference to some of the countries (Austria, Denmark, France, Netherlands and UK) in our forthcoming study of Civic Stratification, Gender and Family Migration Policies in Europe.

1. Forms of family migration

Family migration involves different members – spouses, children and parents within a nuclear family as defined by the state. For purposes of immigration, the family generally includes spouses and dependent children usually under the age of 18 years (younger in Germany). At the same time there has been some recognition of new ways of living together and changing gender relations and sexual orientations[2]. Yet even in this respect, the progressive openings still require those not complying with traditional family patterns, such as same sex couples, to show that they are akin to the nuclear family (Simmons 2004). Furthermore within the nuclear family, the possibility of bringing in family members is largely restricted to spouses or dependent children and highly dependent parents. Thus the generally limited conceptualisation of the family leaves little consideration for problems generated by caring at a distance (Ackers 1998; Baldassar and Baldock 2000), cultural differences in familial relationships, and the role of grandparents or other collateral relations in providing nurturing and support for different members of the family.

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[1] The UK is again an exception for it has had a work permit system since the 1980s for intra-company transfers and a permit-free entry for doctors. Both categories as well as students could bring in family members and their spouses had the right to work. Since the late 1990s there has been a sharp increase in skilled migrants.

[2] For example, under article 4 (3) of the Council Directive 86/2003/EC on the Right to Family Reunification Member States may treat "long term stable relationships" or registered partnerships (under national legislation) as equivalent to marriages. Article 2 of the Directive 2004/38/EC on the right of citizens of the Union and their family members to move and reside freely within the territory of the Member States provides for a similarly extensive definition of family members. However, EU legislation explicitly rules out family reunification involving a second or third wife in polygamous relationships and limits the rights of children born in polygamous marriages.

Within family-related migration, marriage is the principal act and stage in the life course engendering much of family-related migration[3]. It is both a cause and an effect of migration. Family-related activities arising from migration are even more extensive; they encompass both those who have migrated for the purpose of marriage as well as those who have married subsequently. Hence the continued increase of binational and transnational marriages in an age of greater international mobility (van Walsum 2004), whether for work, education or tourism, between citizens of an EU country and non-citizens.

The primacy of labour migration and the absence of official settlement migration in European states, apart from returnees from former colonies, on the one hand, and the attention paid to the growing number of asylum seekers and refugees, on the other hand, have been key reasons for the neglect of family migration. There are, however, other more general reasons for the failure to incorporate the family into theoretical and methodological approaches to migration (Baldassar and Baldock 2000; Kofman 2004). These include neglect of the role of the family in economic theory, the interpretation of migration as a transaction between individuals and states (Vatz Laaroussi 2001; Zlotnik 1995), and the association of the family with female migration and dependency rather than work and autonomy (Kofman et al. 2000).

Whilst less female dominated than in the past, when it was associated with family reunification of primary male migrants bringing in their spouses, family-related migration nonetheless still usually involves a disproportionate percentage of females. Up to two-thirds of family migrants may be women but this tends to be lower for second generation where women frequently bring in male spouses.

There are several forms of family migration but these may be poorly captured by data.
- family reunification with a spouse or children joining a primary migrant or refugee;
- family formation including second or subsequent generations (citizen and non-citizen) bringing in spouses;
- whole family migrating which is more likely to be limited to skilled migrants

Though not strictly speaking a primary form of family-related migration, we also need to consider marriage following earlier moves for work, education and travel involving either the marriage of the migrant with a citizen or another migrant in the receiving country or the citizen returning to the host society with a foreign partner. The latter situation may for certain aspects of immigration and residence conditions be treated as family reunification. In relation to the former, media stories about marriages of convenience have led in the UK to considerable tightening up and regulation of marriages which cover any migrant subject to immigration control (The Asylum and Immigration (Treatment of Claimants, etc) Act 2004).

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[3] The Daphne projects Heirat 1,II,III (2002-6)have provided basic information on marriage migration within the context of migration more generally, legal regulations and organisations providing advice in the pre-accession 15 member states. However the objective was to focus on women and the problems, especially that of violence, they faced rather than broader sociological and gender considerations.

In this context, it was not only made more difficult to claim a residence title on the basis of an existing marriage, but migrants were also denied the right to enter into a marriage – a practice that has recently been successfully challenged before the High Court (NCADC News service, 11 April 2006). In a similar vein, in Austria or the Netherlands civil registrars have to report marriages involving a third country national to the aliens police which in turn may launch investigations into marriages as it suspects of being marriages of convenience (See Aliens Legislation Package 2005, art.7).

2. Family Migration in the Context of Managed Migration

The control of migration, and more recently, its "management" have preoccupied the minds of policy makers ever since the relatively liberal4 migration regime prevailing during the classical period of post-war labour immigration came under increasing pressure in the early 1970s. Subsequently, and especially since the late 1980s, migration policy in general came to be seen as being essentially about controlling migration and preventing unwanted flows. Since the late 1990s, the shift from a strict migration control agenda towards a "migration management" approach led to a reappraisal of economic rationales for more liberal migration policies, but this shift does not signal an end to migration control itself but rather, a move from control to selection.

Nationally, managed migration policies have been most enthusiastically adopted by states, such as the UK, which have placed themselves within a globalised system. The acceptance of immigration and the need to adopt a managed migration approach were officially enshrined in the introduction to the UK White Paper (Home Office 2001) by the Home Secretary, David Blunkett, 'Migration is an inevitable reality of the modern world and it brings substantial benefits. But to ensure that we sustain the positive benefits of migration to our social well-bring and economic prosperity, we need to manage it properly". The modern migration system is characterised as one which successfully harnesses the entrepreneurship and energy of prospective migrants (see Flynn 2005 on the modernisation of British immigration). The acknowledged corollary of the pursuit of the national economic interest is the closure of other possible reasons and routes of entry, notably for undocumented migrants and asylum seekers, and requiring tighter control and deterrence (Morris 2003:3). Restrictions apply as well to family migration which is increasingly seen, along with demands for asylum, as a form of imposed and unwanted immigration. This view is clearly expressed in France, where family migration has been dominant since the 1970s. However, Nicolas Sarkozy, the Interior Minister, has recently proposed shifting from "immigration subie" to "immigration choisie" or selective immigration based on the skills that migrants bring. New legislation was passed by the lower house on 17 May and will be debated in the senate next month. The new legislation would represent a radical break with previous immigration policy and a deliberate strategy to reduce

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[4] Liberal in the sense that "migration policy" was not aimed at restricting entry of aliens but rather at ensuring a sufficient supply of (cheap) labour. Some countries (notably the UK) followed more restrictive policies well before the crisis in the wake of the oil price shock massively reduced the demand for foreign labour.

family migration[5]. As Thierry Mariani (rapporteur de la Commission des Lois) stated in summing up the parliamentary debate:

> *'For the first time in this country we will have the means to once again control the number of immigrants and better integrate family migration and thus equip ourselves with a real migratory policy"*

Asylum and family migration have been underpinned by humanitarian, moral and human rights considerations. What we see currently in attempted restrictions on both these forms of movements is a clash of principles counterposing universal principles, on the one hand, and national interests and the preservation of national identities, on the other (Kofman 2005). Their resolution on the part of the state is through classification, selection and stratification, which seeks to filter, as far as possible, welcome from unwelcome strangers (Schuster 2003).

In addition to human rights considerations, granting migrants the right to family union has traditionally also been justified as promoting the well-being of migrants and their integration into receiving societies (ILO 1999, para 472, Lahav 1999). In the current context which is dominated by concerns over ethnic closure of migrant communities (or the emergence of so-called "parallel societies") and a widespread view that integration of migrant communities has failed (often explicitly or implicitly referring to Muslim communities), the "migrant family", by contrast, is increasingly seen as an obstacle to integration – as a site characterised by patriarchal relationships and illiberal practices and traditions such as arranged and forced marriages, among others. In general, these debates are highly gendered and it is no coincidence that public debates on "the" migrant family centre on the role and status of women.

As a consequence, liberal family migration policies have come increasingly under attack, not just because the right to family reunification is perceived as an undue constraint of the power of the state to determine its admission policy, but also because processes of family migration are seen to be in contradiction with more general policy objectives regarding integration, social cohesion, gender equality and the preservation of national identity, for example in Denmark and the Netherlands.

The changing attitudes towards family migration and the subsequent tightening of family migration provisions, however, are also a response to changing patterns of family migration. Over the past decades, marriage migration has - in quantitative terms – gradually become the most important form of family migration and its share in overall number of family related flows is likely to grow (See BMFSFJ 2001). Thus, much more so than family reunification involving families that have existed prior to migration, marriage migration is seen as undermining migration control policies, for three main reasons:

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[5] Family-related migration has increased sharply from 52,700 in 1999 or 45/9% of all permanent migration to 89.700 or 62.1% of all permanent migration in 2002 (SOPEMI 2005:190).

1. Particularly in countries where strong entitlements to family union exists, a third country national marrying a citizen or a settled migrant eligible for family reunification in a way actively creates an entitlement to admission by virtue of entering a marriage. It is for this reason that migrants entering into a marriage with a settled migrant (or a citizen) in the country of immigration, are frequently under suspicion to have done so for purely instrumental reasons – to gain entry.

2. Secondly, marriage migration involves not only the first, but second and subsequent generations and thus is at the origin of processes of chain migration that – in contrast to chain migrations associated with family reunification – potentially continues over successive generations and involves many more people than does family reunification. In Austria, for example, where family members of citizens and citizens of the European Economic Area have a relatively strong entitlement to join a partner holding Austrian or the citizenship of an EEA member state, 78% of all first long term residence permits issued in 2005 were issued to family members of citizens/ EEA citizens (BMI 2006). The majority of these are thought to be related to marriage migration between naturalised migrants and third country nationals from the same ethnic community. It is not surprising then, that Austria has recently tightened conditions for the acquisition of citizenship with one of the explicit aim to better (if only indirectly) control family related migration involving citizens/ EEA citizens as sponsors.

3. Finally, because marriage migration often involves second and subsequent generations and is frequently characterised by ethnic marriage preferences, it can be seen as contributing to the formation and reproduction of ethnically defined immigrant communities, a process which is across Europe increasingly perceived as a threat to social cohesion and national identity. In addition, in the context of current integration debates, marriage migration is frequently seen as contributing to ethnic closure while reinforcing traditional attitudes and gender relationships within families.

3. Restrictions placed on family migration

Family migration has never been an uncontested issue. In the UK, for example, family migration stood at the centre of political debates on migration policy throughout the 1970s and 1980s and was subject to tight controls Restrictions were imposed on it when the entry clearance system, introduced as an optional mechanism in 1965, was first systematically applied, resulting in long waiting periods and the exclusion of numerous migrants from the benefits of family union. Finally, from 1979, the introduction of the "primary purpose rule" by the Conservative government (male fiancés were only granted admission as family members if immigration officers were satisfied that the primary purpose of the marriage was not immigration) additionally restricted the theoretical right to family union (Bhahbha and Shutter 1994). The UK is probably unique in terms of the severity of the restrictions it placed on family migration, but the right to family union was (and continues to be) hardly unconditional in other countries, too. Though not called 'primary purpose' in other countries, such as the Netherlands, those entering

for reasons of marriage have been questioned concerning their compatibility (de Hart 1999). The Austrian quota system which defines the number of first permits to be issued for different purposes of stay, has repeatedly resulted in a massive backlog of applications and long waiting periods.

In the following section we will review major conditionalities tied to family reunion.

Tying rights to wealth: resource requirements

- Family reunion is a right often restricted to skilled and permanent migrants. Where family reunion is also available for temporary and unskilled migrants, it is by and large granted under more unfavorable conditions, notably with regard to the right to remain in the case a marriage fails. Thus, effectively, socio-economic status has important implications regarding the nature and scope of the right to family union.
- A common condition which is rarely problematised is the linkage between the right to family reunification to the primary migrants' ability to support the family. This involves that family migrants often have only limited social rights and are excluded from a range of social benefits.
- The imposition of levels of social resources (housing, income) is a common feature of family reunification regulations. In the recent years immigration reforms in various countries, e.g. the UK, Denmark, France and the Netherlands have raised the cost of residence and made proof of integration more demanding.
- The social resources required have a disproportionate impact on women, both in using family reunification and acquiring more secure and long-term residence permits (Morris 2002; Kofman 1999). It also results in undocumented migration by those who cannot meet the requirements.

Restrictions: age

- Restrictions on age of marriage and where the couple may live have pushed a growing number of couples to circumvent national restrictions through use of EU legislation for free mobility which allows an EEA national to live in another member state and to be accompanied by close family members regardless of their nationality. This is utilised more and more by Danes moving to Sweden to get round legislation that is now more restrictive than elsewhere in Europe. Denmark, like Ireland and the UK, has not opted into the European Directive on Family Reunion.
- Several states have raised the age at which migrants may bring in spouses from abroad – 24 years in Denmark, 18 in the UK, 21 in the Netherlands. It is particularly directed against migrants from Muslim countries.

Marriages of convenience

- A number of states have introduced legislation to combat marriages of convenience making marriage and family life very difficult for many genuine couples. In the UK since April 2003 a person on a short-term visa cannot switch to a more secure residence through marriage and since February 2005 anyone subject to immigration control must obtain a certificate of approval to marry from the Home Office even if they do not wish to apply for settlement in the country. This was rescinded in April 2006 by the High Court as a contravention of Article 12 of the European Convention on Human Rights on the right to marry and found a family. Asylum seekers and those without permanent residence status are particularly affected
- Restrictions have led to a number of campaigns such as *"Brides Without Borders"* in the UK or Couples without Borders in Denmark.

Probationary period

- The imposition of a probationary period following immigration, and usually for a minimum of 2 years (recently extended from 1 to year in France and the UK with a further extension to 3 years being proposed in France) but often longer, renders the spouse liable to deportation if the marriage breaks down during this time. The threat of deportation maintains women in physically violent and emotionally stressful marriages. Several states do grant the right to stay after failure of a marriage, but largely only if the sponsor was guilty of serious misconduct, notably infidelity.
- An increasing number of states are recognising domestic violence as a reason for granting an autonomous status but this only partially ameliorates exploitative or abusive relationships which a number of women find themselves in. The degree of required evidence is high and must be submitted to public authorities such as the police or social services; it is even more difficult, if not impossible, for asylum seekers, overstayers or the undocumented, to have their situation considered.

Marriage and Integration

- New integration measures in a number of countries make the acquisition of a more secure residence permit dependent on demonstrating knowledge of the language and national society.
- However, there is evidence, as in France, that more women fail to get citizenship due to lack of linguistic competence and drop out of integration courses due to the structural lack of child care.

Labour market issues

- Those entering as spouses often only receive a temporary permit which has implications for their participation in the formal labour force.
- In a number of states the right to enter the labour force is not automatic and is only attributed after a number of years eg. 1-4 years in Germany or Austria and may depend on the nature of the residence permit and/or the current state of the labour market.
- Many of the women who are unable to find work commensurate with their educational level and qualifications will have entered as family migrants (Riano and Baghdadi 2007).

Forced Marriages

- Forced marriages are a major issue of public enquiry in many states, for example in Germany, Sweden and UK.
- The existence of forced marriages is increasingly used as an excuse to raise the age of marital migration.

4. Migration Management, family migration and civic stratification

Although physical controls at the border or within a country and related practices (detention, expulsion, deportation) remain important, contemporary migration management largely operates through allocating differential rights to different categories of migrants. It does so through various mechanisms (classification and selection, admission procedures, conditionalities, and restrictions) and along various axes, notably along nationality, skill level and socio-economic status, and gender – if often only indirectly. As a result, contemporary migration management involves a proliferation, fragmentation and polarisation of different statuses and related bundles of rights with regard to admission, residence, work, social rights, and other domains, resulting in different forms of "partial membership" (Brubaker 1989) or civic stratification (Morris 1997), a term borrowed from David Lockwood (1996). In relation to immigrants, this can be conceptualised as the hierarchy of stratified rights resulting from processes of exclusion and inclusion which classifies and sorts out migrants and the realisation of rights formally associated with these locations (Morris 2002: 7). The concept of civic stratification can also be used to evaluate the general expansion or contraction of rights in relation to specific groups of migrants.

In this way, immigration regulations produce new forms of inequality, while frequently reinforcing "traditional" ones along the lines of class, gender and ethnicity and "race". Although the rights of long-term migrants have been increasingly recognised, access to denizenship (Hammar 1990) is increasingly restricted and tied to ever more demanding conditions. Thus rather than a general trend towards more inclusive conceptions of membership – a hope that has been tied to the concept of denizenship – we are witnessing processes of highly selective inclusion that leave a great number of migrants with lesser rights or with none at all. For example, although recent EU legislation (directive on third country nationals who are long term

residents, family reunification directive, directive on the right of citizen of the Union and their family members to move and reside freely within the territory of the Member States) has partly been motivated to strengthen the legal status of migrants in the Union and may seem to have achieved these objectives at first sight, in practice the legislation often reinforces and aggravates civic stratification, not least since the barriers to be granted a superior long-term status are so high.

Clearly, legal statuses allocated to foreign migrants by immigration laws are important in constraining or enabling the scope for migrants' agency. In this sense, immigration legislation can be regarded as an important part of the political opportunity structure and an important factor determining migrants' participation in the wider society. One category where this particularly applies refers to migrants entering for family -related reasons.

Family migration policies produce civic stratification along various axes and different mechanisms: through narrow and conservative legal concepts of the family that fail to accommodate "non-conventional" family forms; differential entitlements and obligations for different modes of family migration (reunification, formation, marriage) and for different categories of migrants (long- term vs. short term migrants; family members of EU-nationals, third country nationals and EU-nationals). As family migration regulations essentially consist of stereotypical solutions to stereotypically framed problems, they also will work out very differently for different categories of migrants as well as for men and women, aggravating the civic stratification already built in the laws.
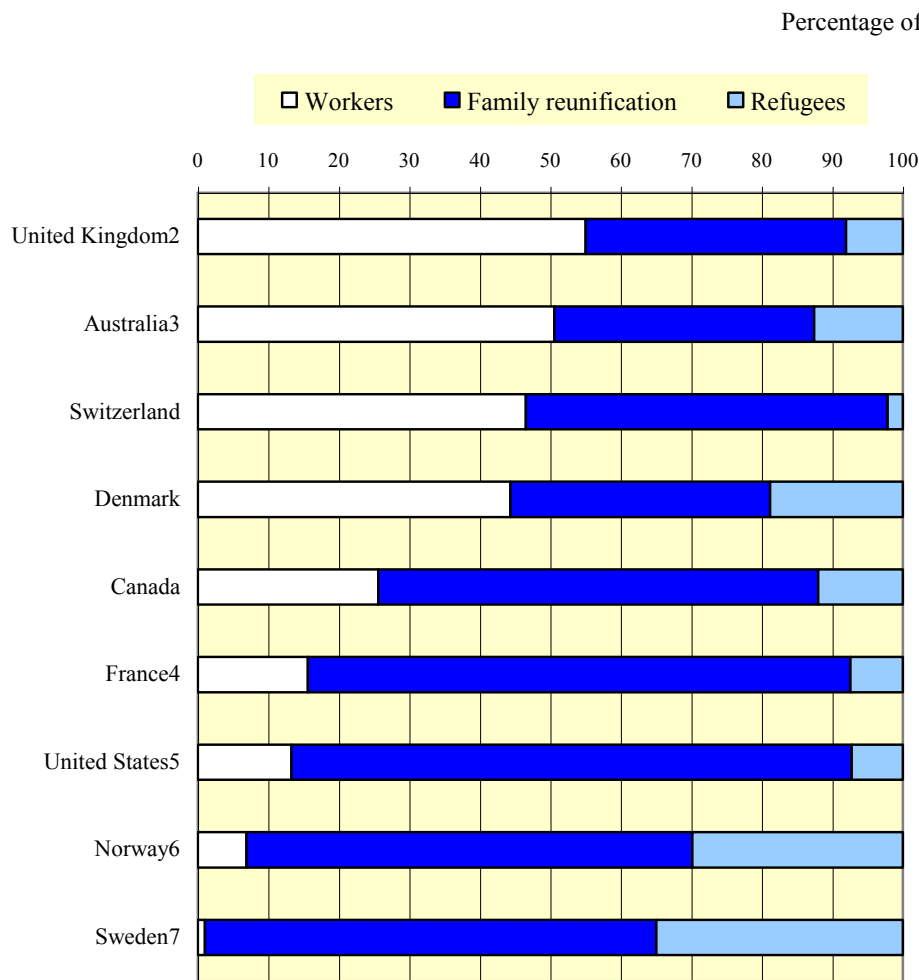
Because family migration has (alongside asylum related migration) become one of the most important modes of entry to European receiving states, family migration policy in turn has become an increasingly important source of civic stratification. With regard to family migration, EU legislation has become increasingly important, however, with paradoxical effects, as the legislation is clearly shaped by the tension that exists between the progressive agenda to strengthen migrants' rights, which in turn is based on human right norms of an understanding that superior rights are a necessary prerequisite for the attainment of full social, civic and eventually political participation of migrants ("civic integration"), on the one hand, and a continuing concern to control migration and to restrict the allocation of these rights to "deserving" migrants, on the other.

Surprisingly little attention has been paid in this context to the consequences of civic stratification on migrants and its wider implications for social cohesion and social integration, although the concept of "civic integration" developed by the European Commission clearly recognises that immigration regulations act as barriers to full participation and thus may have discriminatory effects (See Bauböck 2005).
However, the various restrictions and conditionalities tied to family migration and some of which we have outlined above, can be assumed to have major adverse consequence on migrants and their spouses/families affected by these regulations. These consequences are not necessarily limited to the immediate implications of these restrictions (as for example restricted or no access to the labour market), but may have wider ramifications (see IPRS 2002). What is

more, they are in contradiction with a wide range of other policy goals, including the fight against social exclusion and discrimination and the full participation of migrants in all spheres of society ("integration"). Not least since family migration has become quantitatively so important, these "unintended" side-effects of over-restrictive family migration policies are by no means minute: they affect a large number of people and – so we argue – deserve specific attention.

Chart 2.   **Permanent or long-term immigration flows into selected OECD countries by main categories¹ in 2003**

Percentage of total inflows

Legend: □ Workers   ■ Family reunification   □ Refugees

Countries (top to bottom): United Kingdom2, Australia3, Switzerland, Denmark, Canada, France4, United States5, Norway6, Sweden7

Note: Countries are ranked by decreasing order of the percentage of workers in total inflows. Categories give the legal reason for entering the country. A worker who has benefited from the family reunification procedure is regrouped into this latter category even if he has a job in the host country while entering. Family members who join a refugee are counted among other refugees.

1.   For Australia, Canada, the United States, Norway and Sweden, data concern acceptances for settlement. For Denmark, France, Portugal and Switzerland, entries correspond to residence permits usually delivered for a period longer than one year. For the United Kingdom, data are based on entry control at ports of certain categories of migrants (excluding EEA citizens). For Australia, "Workers" includes accompanying dependents who are included in the category "Family reunification" for all other countries.

2.   Passengers, excluding EEA citizens, admitted to the United Kingdom. Data only include certain categories of migrants: work permit holders, spouses and refugees.

3.   Data refer to fiscal year (July 2002 to June 2003). Category "Workers" includes accompanying dependents. Excluding citizens from New Zealand who do not need a visa to enter the country.

4.   Entries of EU family members are estimated. Excluding visitors. Among those who benefited from the regularisation programme, only those who received a permit under the family reunification procedure are counted. The "family" category also includes spouses of French citizens and scientists; parents of French children; and those with family relationships, who received the permit "vie privée et familiale."

5.   Data refer to fiscal year (October 2002 to September 2003). Excluding immigrants who obtained a permanent residence permit following the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA).

6.   Category "Workers" includes specialists and other permits that constitute grounds for permanent residence in Norway. Non-renewable permits are not included. Category "Refugees" includes refugees and persons granted residence permit on humanitarian grounds on permanent basis.

7.   Excluding Nordic and EEA citizens.

Sources: National Statistical Offices; *Trends in International Migration, 2005.*

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