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**IMMIGRANTS FROM ARAB COUNTRIES TO THE OECD:
FROM THE PAST TO THE FUTURE**

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Introduction

For a number of reasons, migration from Arab countries is particularly significant to the OECD and will probably remain so in the future. One of these reasons is the importance of Arab countries in past and current immigration to several OECD countries, especially in Europe. Another argument can be found in the diverging demographic prospects of the European and North African labour forces (Fargues, 2005). The magnitude of trade relationships with OECD countries is also meaningful to understand these

A. Immigrants from Arab countries in the OECD countries: a census-based description

A.1. How many people living in OECD countries are originating from Arab countries ?

In total, 4.9 million person born in Arab countriesⁱⁱ were living in OECD countries in 2000 (see Table 1). This represents 11.8% of all foreign-born originating from non-OECD countries, a share that is more than double that of the Arab countries' population in the non-OECD world population (4.9% in 2000). The emigration rate for the whole region is not large (2%), and important differences are recorded between origin countries, with Lebanon and Maghreb countries (Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia) having between 4.2% and 7.5% of their populations abroad. These figures should be compared to the percentages calculated, for instance, for Sub-Saharan African countries (0.54% on average), or for Asian non-Arab non-OECD countries (0.39% on average). Clearly, the Arab region remains an important source of migrants for OECD countries.

Table 1. Total stocks and emigration rate of immigrants from Arab countries, by country of birth in OECD countries, circa 2000

	Stock, Numbers	Emigration rate, %
Algeria	1 364 674	4.2
Bahrain	9 785	1.4
Egypt	337 405	0.5
Iraq	348 527	1.5
Jordan	72 296	1.4
Kuwait	46 264	2.0
Lebanon	353 657	7.5
Libya	69 190	1.3
Morocco	1 604 702	5.2
Oman	4 972	0.2
Palestinian territory	16 168	0.5
Qatar	4 850	0.8
Saudi Arabia	59 473	0.3
Syria	143 940	0.9
Tunisia	443 710	4.4
United Arab Emirates	24 030	0.8
Yemen	37 995	0.2
Total (above countries)	4 941 638	2.0

Source: OECD database on foreign-born and expatriates.

In terms of receiving countries, France ranks first, even if foreign-born with French nationality at birth are excluded (about 1 million persons including 670 000 repatriates from Algeria)ⁱⁱⁱ. Almost 50% of immigrants from Arab countries living in the OECD are in France (see Table 2). The second largest receiving country is the United States, with four times fewer persons. Other OECD countries receiving a significant number of immigrants from Arab countries (more than 200 000) are, in decreasing order, Spain, Italy, Canada, the Netherlands and to a lesser extent (more than 100 000) the United Kingdom, Australia, Sweden and Belgium.

As a share of their total foreign-born population, immigrants from Arab countries are important mostly for France (40%) and for Spain, Sweden, the Netherlands, Denmark, Belgium and Italy. For other OECD countries, including the United States, they represent a negligible share of the foreign-born population.

Table 2. Stocks of immigrants from Arab countries by country of residence, OECD countries, circa 2000

Numbers and as a percentage of total foreign-born population

	Numbers	% of total foreign-born	% of total of immigrants from Arab countries migrants
Australia	153 550	3.8	3.1
Austria	19 989	2.0	0.4
Belgium	149 526	13.6	3.0
Canada	245 150	4.3	5.0
Czech Republic	2 197	0.5	0.0
Denmark	41 820	11.6	0.8
Finland	6 442	4.9	0.1
France	2 376 455	40.5	48.1
Germany	43 250	0.5	0.9
Greece	51 877	4.6	1.0
Hungary	2 704	0.9	0.1
Ireland	4 874	1.2	0.1
Italy	310 942	13.9	6.3
Japan	1 645	0.1	0.0
Luxembourg	1 465	1.0	0.0
Mexico	2 077	0.4	0.0

One of the most striking features of the migration from Arab countries to OECD countries is the predominance of a few origin and receiving countries, often linked by cultural and historical bilateral links. In this regard, the case of France is obvious. Algeria is the main country of origin for migration from Arab countries to France (see Table 3) and reciprocally more than 90% of Algerian expatriates are in France (see Table 4). But France is also the main receiving country for Tunisians and Moroccans. Migration from Morocco to Belgium or Switzerland; from Libya to Italy; from Egypt to Greece and the United Kingdom; from Oman to the United Kingdom; or from the Arabian Peninsula and Egypt to the United States are also the result of longstanding relationships.

The concentration of some nationalities in some OECD countries is more recent, and results either from the importance of humanitarian migration (*e.g.* Iraqis in Nordic countries) or of recent inflows, mainly driven by geographic proximity and economic opportunities (*e.g.* Moroccans in Italy or Spain).

One special case concerns migration from Lebanon, which is significant and widely dispersed. Lebanese communities are sizeable in virtually all OECD countries, including, for instance, Mexico, with a limited number, just above one thousand. The figures are particularly large in the main OECD settlement countries (Australia, Canada and the United States), which concentrate about 70% of Lebanese

Table 3. Main country of origin (among Arab countries) by country of residence, OECD countries, circa 2000

Country of residence	Main country of origin (among Arab countries)	Numbers	% of the stocks of immigrants from Arab countries	% of total foreign-born
Australia	Lebanon	71 349	46.5	1.8
Austria	Egypt	9 168	45.9	0.9
Belgium	Morocco	116 854	78.1	10.6
Canada	Lebanon	68 875	28.1	1.2
Czech Republic	Syria	437	19.9	0.1
Denmark	Iraq	17 476	41.8	4.8
Finland	Iraq	3 209	49.8	2.4
France	Algeria	1 246 706	52.5	21.2
Greece	Egypt	32 687	63.0	2.9
Hungary	Syria	689	25.5	0.2
Ireland	Algeria	866	17.8	0.2
Italy	Morocco	155 807	50.1	7.0
Japan	Egypt	754	45.8	0.0
Luxembourg	Morocco	558	38.1	0.4
Mexico	Lebanon	1 143	55.0	0.2
Netherlands	Morocco	155 819	70.8	9.6
New Zealand	Iraq	4 848	54.5	0.7
Norway	Iraq	14 687	61.2	4.4
Poland	Syria	552	18.2	0.1
Portugal	Morocco	1 354	68.3	0.2
Slovak Republic	Syria	107	28.8	0.1
Spain	Morocco	313 739	88.3	14.4
Sweden	Iraq	67 645	55.3	6.3
Switzerland	Morocco	9 427	25.3	0.6
Turkey	Iraq	8 889	32.5	0.7
United Kingdom	Iraq	32 236	21.2	0.7
United States	Egypt	117 500	20.4	0.3

Source: OECD database on foreign-born and expatriates.

http://www.oecd.org/document/16/0,2340,en_2649_33931_33865936_1_1_1_1,00.html

Table 4. Main country of residence by Arab country of birth, circa 2000

	Main country of residence	Numbers	% of total stock of each Arab migrant group
Algeria	France	1 246 706	91.4
Bahrain	United Kingdom	4 185	42.8
Egypt	United States	117 500	34.8
Iraq	United States	91 595	26.3
Jordan	United States	49 025	67.8
Kuwait	United States	21 535	46.5
Lebanon	United States	110 775	31.3
Libya	Italy	37 608	54.4
Morocco	France	709 521	44.2
Oman	United Kingdom	2 024	40.7
Palestinian territory	Canada	5 635	34.9
Qatar	United States	1 810	37.3
Saudi Arabia	United States	27 410	46.1
Syria	United States	55 910	38.8
Tunisia	France	340 752	76.8

first oil crisis, most immigrants who arrived in the 1960s or 1970s decided not to return to their origin country. A settlement type of migration has resulted which can be identified in the age structure of stocks of migrant. This phenomenon is also clearly illustrated in Table 6, which represents the distribution of immigrants by duration of stay and country of origin.

The case of Morocco is slightly different, because emigration from this country has recently

Table 6. Distribution of migrants (15+) to selected OECD count

Moroccan immigrants, partly because a lot of them are recent immigrants to southern European countries, or are living in European countries which make it relatively difficult to change nationality (*e.g.* France, Germany and Switzerland). On the other hand, about half of Kuwaitis and Bahrainis are nationals of their country of current residence (mainly the United States).

Table 8. Distribution of immigrants (15+) to selected OECD countries by citizenship status, Arab country of birth, circa 2000
(Percentages)

	National	Foreigner
Algeria	65.0	35.0
Bahrain	47.9	52.1
Egypt	66.9	33.1
Iraq	55.3	44.7
Jordan	63.3	36.7
Kuwait	49.3	50.7
Lebanon	79.5	20.5
Libya	88.0	12.0
Morocco	37.9	62.1
Oman	30.4	69.6
Palestinian territory	77.2	22.8
Qatar	41.0	59.0
Saudi Arabia	42.8	57.2
Syria	67.8	32.2
Tunisia	61.0	39.0
United Arab Emirates	40.2	59.8
Yemen	55.8	44.2
Total (above countries)	57.2	42.8

Note: OECD countries included are the following : Australia, Canada, Italy, France, Spain, Sweden, United States.

Source: OECD database on foreign-born and expatriates.

A.3. Highly skilled migration from Arab countries to the OECD

In terms of skills, the most striking result is the relative importance of low-skilled immigrants from Maghreb countries (Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia) (see Table 9). For instance, about 63% of migrants from Morocco have less than secondary level of schooling and 23% no more than upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary level. The case of Algerians and Tunisians is broadly similar. This contrasts sharply with the migration from Egypt, where respectively 50% and 47% of migrants hold a tertiary degree. Migration from Lebanon and Syria is much more balanced and flows from the Arabian Peninsula tend to be focused on intermediate levels (which is consistent with a student migration pattern). In absolute value, the largest highly skilled groups are Moroccan and Algerian, with about 200 000 expatriates each.

For all origin countries, the share of the low-skilled is higher for migrant women. In 6 countries (Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya and Syria), the percentage of women holding a tertiary degree is at least 10 percentage points lower than for men. By contrast, migrant women originating from Qatar and United Arab Emirates tend to be more skilled than men and there is no significant gender difference in the case

Table 9. Distribution of migrants (15+) to OECD countries by Educational attainment, Arab country of birth, circa 2000
(Percentages)

Less than upper secondary (ISCED 0/1/2)	Upper secondary and post- secondary non- tertiary (ISCED 3/4)	Tertiary
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**Table 10. Emigration rates of the highly qualified to OECD countries, circa 2000
(Highly qualified expatriates as a percentage of all native-born tertiary graduates)**

	Top 20		Bottom 20
Guyana	76.9	United States	0.4
Jamaica	72.6	Japan	1.2
Guinea-Bissau	70.3	Brazil	1.5
Haiti	68.0	Thailand	1.5
Trinidad and Tobago	66.1	Indonesia	1.5

Morocco and Tunisia), the availability of grants for the international mobility of students, as well as the role of diasporas and family networks.

To benefit from these migration flows the challenges for the origin countries should not be underestimated. It requires, among others, maintaining the links with students and highly skilled

B. Recent changes in migration from Arab countries to OECD countries: facts and prospects

The picture which was drawn in the previous section was based on stock data. What can immigration flow data tell us about the recent changes with regard to migration from Arab countries? More specifically, what are the most notable changes over the last 10-15 years in terms of the migration channels towards the OECD, and what can we expect in the near future?

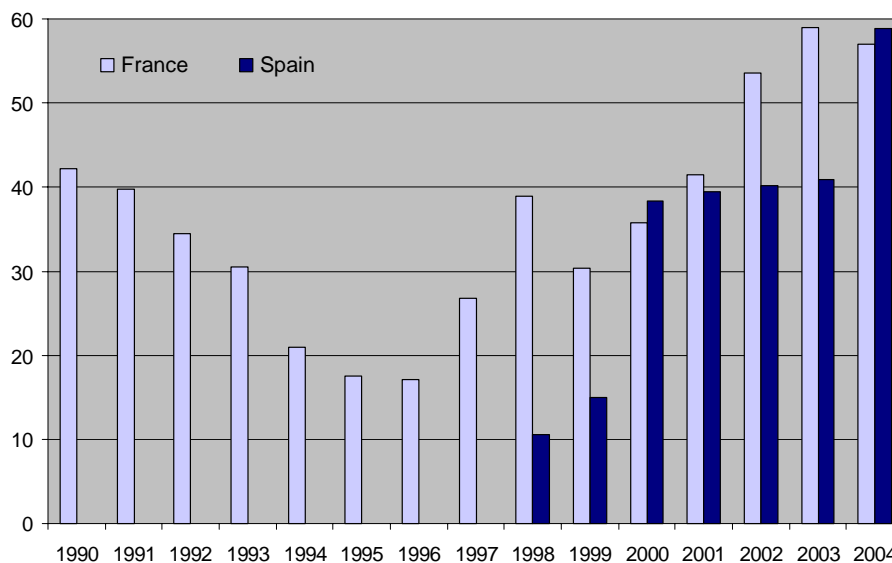
Graph 1 presents the inflow of migrants from Arab countries in major OECD countries since the early 1990s. These flows, which do not include asylum seekers, show a global increase in immigration from the region, mostly driven by Maghreb countries (Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia). The Graphs depict notably:

- (i) The rapid and recent increase in migration from Morocco to the OECD countries. If these trends were to continue, Moroccans could make up one out of two immigrants from Arab countries in the OECD area in less than 5 years.
- (ii) The key role played by geopolitical determinants in migration movements from the region.
- (iii) The persistence of Lebanese emigration at a fairly high level (as a percentage of total population, in 2004 migration flows from Lebanon rank just after those originating from Morocco).

Graph 1. Inflows of immigrants from Arab countries in major OECD host countries, 1990-2004 (Thousands)

Data from the 4 main receiving countries in Europe and North America (the United States, Canada, France and Spain) complement this picture (see Graphs 2 and 3). It appears that permanent migration from Arab countries to the United States had started to decrease, even before the 1990s. In relative terms, it has followed more or less the global trends and even the marked decrease observed in

Graph 3. Immigration of Algerians, Moroccans, Tunisians and Lebanese to France (1990-2004) and of Moroccans to Spain (1998-2004) (Thousands)



Source: OECD database on International Migration.

But clearly when looking forward at the immigration trends from Arab countries to the OECD, it is important not only to consider the situation of the receiving countries but also that of the origin countries. In this context, what are the perspectives with regard to intra regional migration ? What role may on-going regional economic integration processes play ? What are the labour market prospects for the cohorts of youth currently entering the labour market in their countries of origin ? Is there is any “chance” that the anticipated labour demand in the OECD countries in the context of population ageing match with the expected labour surplus in the origin countries, in terms of both timing and skill composition ? How to better adapt human resources policies to local needs ? How to better share the benefits of the international mobility of the highly skilled between the origin and the receiving countries and the migrants ? As many questions which go far beyond the recent changes in migration flows and policies in the OECD.

Conclusion

The previous description of the scope and the demographic characteristics of former migration from the Arab countries to the OECD demonstrates the importance of historical and cultural links in shaping the new migration trends. The future of migration from Arab countries should not be very different, despite recent changes in the main destination countries and a progressive bipolarization of migration movements towards the most highly skilled and the low-skilled.

Taking into account the importance of the stocks of immigrants from Arab countries, especially in the main European receiving countries, the issue of their labour market integration and of their insertion into the society, including for the second generations, remains crucial to facilitate the management of future migration flows as well as to reinforce the potential strength of the migration-development nexus.

In many developing countries, including in the Arab region, the labour force will continue to grow at a fast rate in the next decades and employment issues will probably remain a matter of concern. In this context, migration cannot be a substitute for sound macroeconomic policies, the development of social and economic infrastructures and good governance. Within the Mediterranean Bg

References :

Dumont JC. & G. Lemaitre (2005a), *Counting immigrants and expatriates: a new perspective*, OECD