

Western Asia and Northern Africa

Northern Africa is a major source of migrants seeking employment abroad, especially in Europe. By contrast, Western Asian countries that are major oil producers, such as members of the Gulf Cooperation Council, as well as the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, are important destinations for incoming labourers. These oil field workers traditionally came from neighbouring nations, but increasingly are arriving from Asia. Turkey and several countries in Northern Africa have become transit points for growing numbers of persons from Asia and sub-Saharan Africa trying to enter the European Union clandestinely.

In Northern Africa, the country with the largest stock of nationals residing in other countries (primarily European) is Morocco. Lebanon, in 2000, had the largest proportion of its work force employed abroad. *See table 1 next page.* These figures indicate a fairly low level of worker migration—only Lebanon has over ten per cent of its labour force living abroad. By comparison, 15 nations in Latin America and the Caribbean register over 10 per cent of their labour force residing in other countries.

Migrants departing from Northern African countries (apart from Egypt) tend to be low skilled, while migrants from Western Asia, i.e., the Middle East, most often have 13 years or more of schooling, according to statistics from the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development.

Remittances received from workers residing abroad make a significant impact in both Northern Africa and Western Asia. It is estimated that families in the developing countries in the Mediterranean Basin (North African nations as well as Jordan, Syria, Turkey and Lebanon) received remittances valued at \$15 billion in 2004, constituting approximately 10 per cent of remittances received by all developing countries that year.

The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership was instituted in November 1995 as a wide framework for political, economic and cultural cooperation between member states of the European Union and other countries bordering the Sea. Cooperation regarding the flow of migrant workers northward was among the objectives. More recently, the establishment of the European Neighborhood Policy and a trend toward bi-lateral aid and cooperation frameworks has reduced somewhat the scope for a regional, multilateral approach, and introduced a stronger focus on security.

Admission policies in Gulf countries

Among the Gulf Cooperation Council, all countries have policies for admitting low-skilled migrants. The employment and stay of migrant workers in those countries are usually regulated through the issuance of work permits tied to a particular employer.

The GCC countries nevertheless restrict migrant inflows as part of an objective of reducing dependence on foreign workers and fostering increased employment among their own nationals. In 2003, for instance, the Government of

Table 1: Stock of Emigrants from the Middle East, North Africa in OECD (America) and OECD (Europe), 2000

Source: Docquier and Marfouk (2005)

Notes: OECD (America includes 2 countries: Canada and United States (no data available for Mexico). OECD (Europe) includes 18 countries: Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and United Kingdom (no data available for Greece, Iceland, Poland, Slovak Republic and Turkey). Emigrants include all working age (25 years or older) foreign-born individuals living in an OECD country.