

Migration Policy Group

# Family reunion: confronting stereo- types, understanding family life

MPG briefings for the Green Paper on Family Reunion #1

**Abstract:** *Who do you imagine when you think of family reunion? You may see Moroccan and Turkish wives arriving in countries with longer histories of family immigration like Austria, Belgium, France, and Germany. You may think family reunion is the way that most immigrants come to your EU Member State. These stereotypes are far from the real lives of these families who are making the EU their home. Any debate on the EU Family Reunion Directive should start with Eurostat's comparable statistics. Around half a million non-EU family members were able to reunite with their non-EU sponsor in 2010 in one of 23 EU Member States (statistics not reported for Cyprus, Estonia, Luxembourg, and The Netherlands). The overall number slightly increased from 2009 to 2010 as many more children joined their parent(s) in Italy and Spain. In most EU countries, the number of reuniting non-EU families is small compared to the many other people arriving legally every year. They are the most important in Sweden and new countries of immigration in Southern and Central Europe. There are more reuniting non-EU families in Italy or Spain than in France or Germany and more in Czech Republic, Greece, or Portugal than in Austria or Belgium. These newcomer families are very diverse, coming from all over the globe. Rarely do the majority in a given EU country come from the same country or region. In most countries, non-EU family reunion involves only the nuclear family and annually affects more children than spouses or partners.*

Thomas Huddleston, MPG Policy Analyst. 9.11.2011

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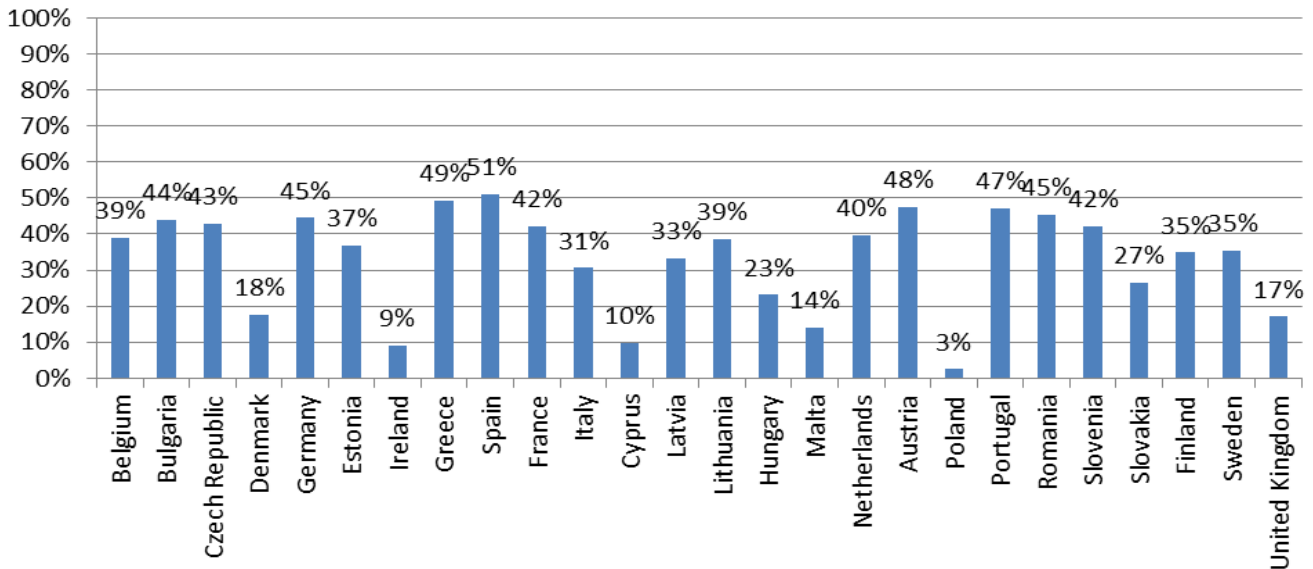
## Is family reunion how most people come to my country? No.

Family reunion is often presented as the reason why most people move to an EU Member State. Instead, the European Commission noted that family immigration has progressively decreased from half of all legal immigration in the early 2000s to about one third today. According to Eurostat, most newcomers in 2010 were not reuniting family members. The majority of newcomers came with permits to work, to study, to benefit from international protection, and so on.

People coming with a family permit do not make up the majority of newcomers, but they are a large – and sometimes the largest – group in the majority of EU Member States, as seen below in Table 1. In fact, family reunion is as significant in new countries of immigration like BG, CZ, GR, PT and ES as it is in countries often associated with family immigration like AT, DE, and the NL.

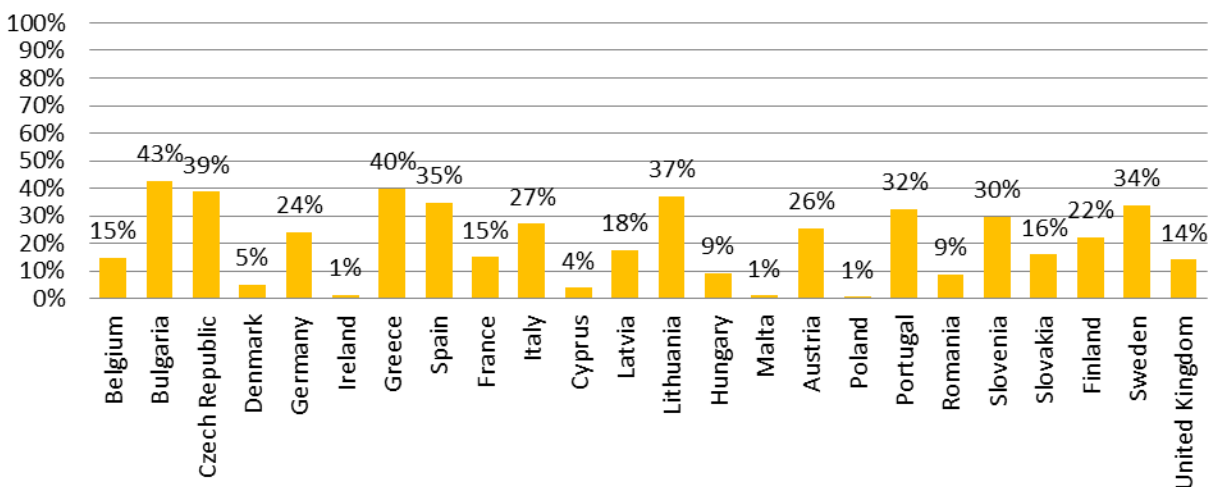
These figures are not the most appropriate for the EU Family Reunion Directive 2003/86/EC. The people counted in EU statistics for each country include the family members of that country’s nationals and of other EU residents who used their free movement rights. The number of family reunions seems so high in countries like AT, BE, FR and DE because nearly every other person who obtained a family permit in 2010 belonged to the family of an EU citizen. EU citizens’ family members accounted for most of the people able to reunite through family reunion in CY, DK, IE, MT, and RO.

**Table 1: Permits for family reasons as % of all legal immigration in 2010**



## Are most people coming to my country reuniting non-EU families? No.

**Table 2: Permits for non-EU families as % of all legal immigration in 2010**



**Table 3: Newly reunited non-EU families**

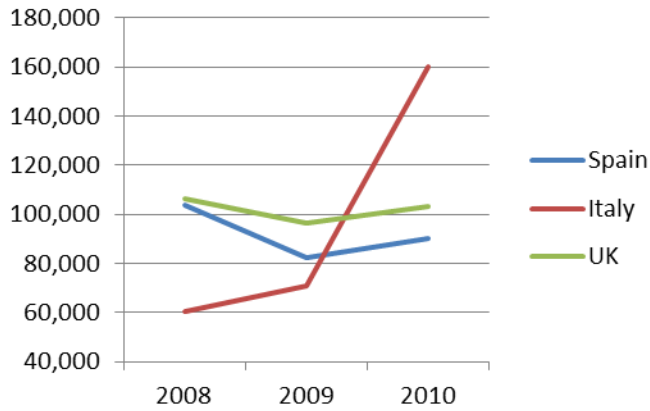
	2010
Belgium	9,997
Bulgaria	1,725
Czech Republic	13,398
Denmark	1,490
Germany	28,200
Ireland	300
Greece	13,398
Spain	89,905
France	29,400
Italy	160,200
Latvia	413
Lithuania	691
Hungary	1,349
Malta	30
Austria	7,838
Poland	598
Portugal	11,967
Romania	910
Slovenia	2,231
Slovakia	697
Finland	4,302
Sweden	25,358
United Kingdom	103,187

Table 2 presents the latest Eurostat statistics on how many third-country nationals came to EU countries to join their third-country national sponsor in 2010. These are the people directly affected by Directive 2003/86/EC. *Note: Eurostat does not provide comparable data for CY, EE, LU, and NL.*

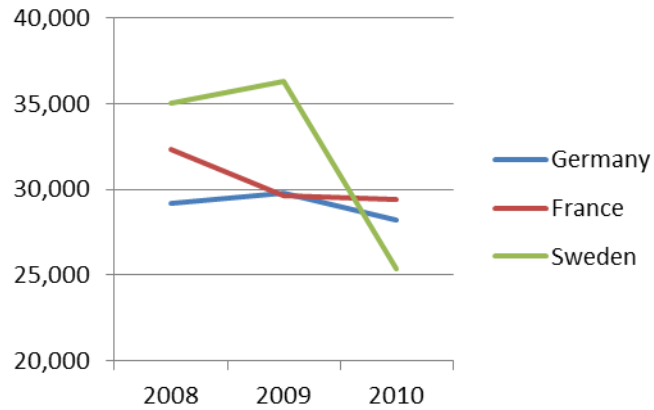
In most Member States, the number of reuniting non-EU family members is not very large in comparison to the many other people arriving every year. The countries where reuniting non-EU families are most important in the EU are SE and new countries of immigration. These countries include the Southern European countries that attracted migrant workers like GR, PT, and ES and Central European countries that have very new and very few immigrant communities like BG, CZ, LT, and SI. At most, reuniting non-EU families constituted 43% of newly arriving immigrants in BG. In other countries, only one in three newcomers was family joining a non-EU national in AT, FI, DE, and IT. The number drops to one in six in BE, FR, or the UK. Very few of the newcomers in DK, IE, CY, MT, or PL get a permit for non-EU family reunion.

Table 3 presents the number of people granted a family permit to live with their non-EU sponsor in 2010. The number of new arrivals is modest for most countries. Most are not in countries often associated with family immigration like FR or DE, but in other major countries of immigration today: IT, ES, and the UK.

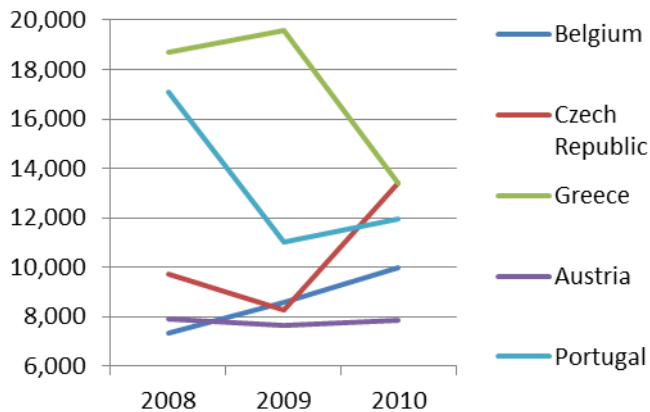
**Table 4: Largest EU destinations for reuniting non-EU families**



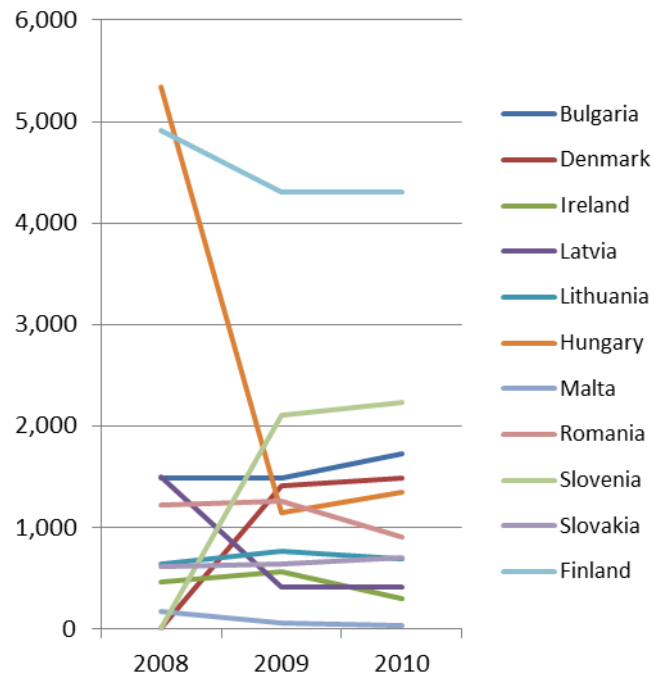
**Table 5: Other major destinations for reuniting non-EU families**



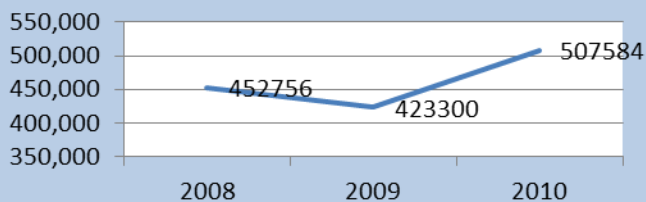
**Table 6: Mid-sized destinations for reuniting non-EU families**



**Table 7: Minor destinations for non-EU families**



**Table 8: EU countries as destinations for reuniting non-EU families**



— Total 23 EU Countries (CY, EE, LU, NL excluded.  
Note: no data for DK in 2008)

In 2010, over 500,000 non-EU family members are estimated to have reunited with their non-EU sponsor in 23 EU Member States with comparable Eurostat data (Table 8). Many more reunited in 2010 because twice as many were recorded as receiving permits in IT, now the EU's major destination for reuniting non-EU families. As shown in Table 4, over two thirds of these families moved to three countries in 2010: IT (30% of the total), UK (20%) and ES (18%).

FR, DE, and SE also welcome a significant number of non-EU families (together around 16% of the total), but far fewer than the top three destinations. Significantly fewer permits were accorded in smaller countries with significant immigrant populations (Table 6). These countries account for 10%. Among them, there are more reuniting non-EU families in new countries of immigration – CZ, GR, and PT than in countries often associated with family immigration – AT and BE.

The remaining 12 countries in Table 7 have comparatively very few non-EU families reuniting together (only 6%). Most have very new and small immigrant communities. In contrast, CY, DK, and IE grant few non-EU family permits even though non-EU nationals make up between 3-6% of these countries' population.

Between 2008 and 2010, decreases in non-EU family reunion were significant for ES, SE, GR, PT, and HU and slight for FR. Increases were significant for CZ and slight in BE.

**Table 9: Reuniting non-EU families in 2010 by top 10 citizenships**

	Morocco	India	Albania	Pakistan	China	Ukraine	Turkey	Moldova	USA	Ecuador
Belgium	16%	4%	1%	1%	2%	1%	6%	0%	3%	0%
Bulgaria	0%	1%	1%	0%	2%	9%	28%	7%	3%	0%
Czech Republic	0%	1%	0%	0%	2%	35%	0%	3%	4%	0%
Denmark	1%	0%	0%	2%	3%	3%	10%	0%	1%	0%
Germany	1%	6%	0%	1%	3%	2%	17%	0%	5%	0%
Estonia										
Ireland	0%	1%	2%	3%	2%	1%	0%	2%	1%	0%
Greece	0%	3%	84%	1%	1%	1%	0%	1%	0%	0%
Spain	36%	2%	0%	10%	10%	2%	0%	1%	0%	7%
France	17%	1%	0%	1%	4%	0%	7%	0%	1%	0%
Italy	14%	5%	14%	6%	7%	4%	1%	6%	1%	2%
Cyprus	0%	3%	1%	6%	1%	7%	0%	7%	3%	0%
Latvia	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	11%	0%	0%	6%	0%
Lithuania	0%	2%	0%	1%	1%	12%	2%	0%	4%	0%
Luxembourg										
Hungary	0%	6%	0%	0%	24%	8%	1%	0%	14%	0%
Malta	0%	17%	7%	0%	0%	3%	13%	0%	7%	0%
Netherlands										
Austria	0%	3%	0%	1%	2%	1%	26%	0%	1%	0%
Poland	0%	3%	0%	0%	7%	30%	5%	1%	1%	0%
Portugal	1%	1%	0%	1%	9%	11%	0%	5%	0%	0%
Romania	0%	2%	0%	1%	27%	1%	23%	4%	5%	0%
Slovenia	0%	0%	0%	0%	2%	1%	0%	0%	1%	0%
Slovakia	0%	0%	0%	0%	12%	17%	2%	0%	6%	0%
Finland	1%	9%	0%	2%	4%	2%	4%	0%	2%	0%
Sweden	1%	1%	0%	1%	3%	1%	4%	0%	0%	0%
United Kingdom	0%	25%	0%	11%	3%	0%	1%	0%	6%	0%
Total 24 EU Countries	12%	8%	7%	6%	6%	3%	3%	2%	2%	2%

## Are most reuniting non-EU families from Morocco or Turkey? No.

Although the public associates family reunion with specific countries of origin, the list of the top 10 countries (Table 9) shows that families come from all over the world. The table shows what percent of reuniting non-EU families in each country in 2010 came from a given non-EU country of origin, as indicated by the arriving families' nationality. It also shows total figures for 24 sampled EU Member States.

Moroccans, the largest group, make up only 12% in the 24 EU countries. That's just one in eight reuniting families. For Turks, the figure is much lower, at 3% (or just one in 33).

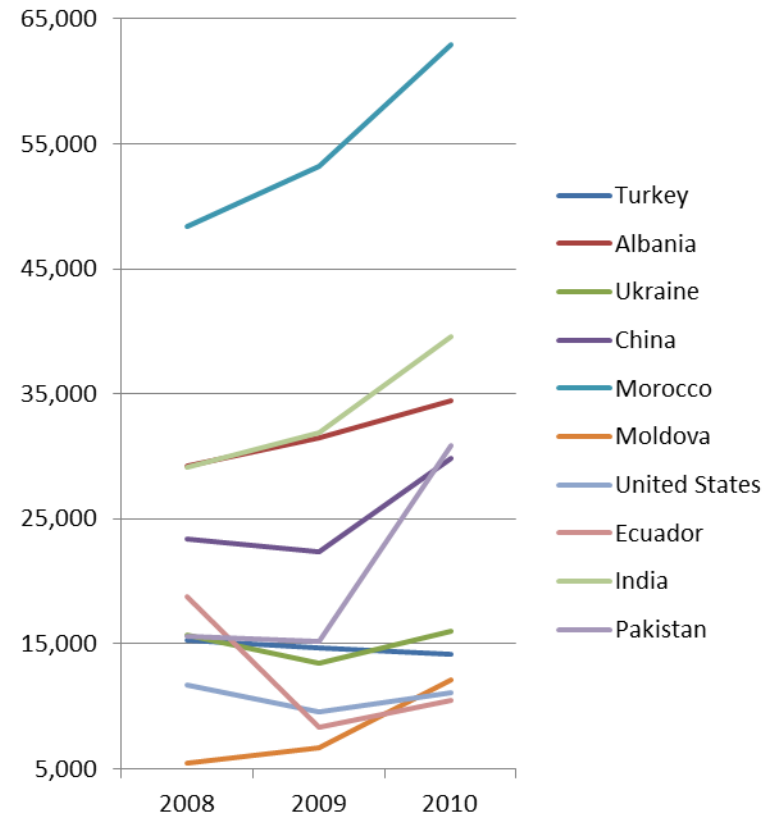
Most recently reunited non-EU families in EU countries came from the world's largest countries, Europe's neighbours, and major countries of origin for immigrants settled in the EU. This top 10 list includes important countries of origin for Europe both near (Albania, Ukraine, Moldova) and afar (India, Pakistan, Ecuador). Indians, Chinese, Americans, and Russians are slightly under-represented compared to their large part in the global population.

Reuniting non-EU families are even more diverse than this list. In most EU countries, each of these 10 nationalities rarely made up more than 10% of all reuniting non-EU families. Only half of these families came from the top 10 origin countries for the sampled 24 EU countries. The top 25 origin countries include countries from Asia, Central and South America, Europe, Middle East, and Sub-Saharan Africa.

**Table 10: 3 Top origin countries by citizenship in 2010**

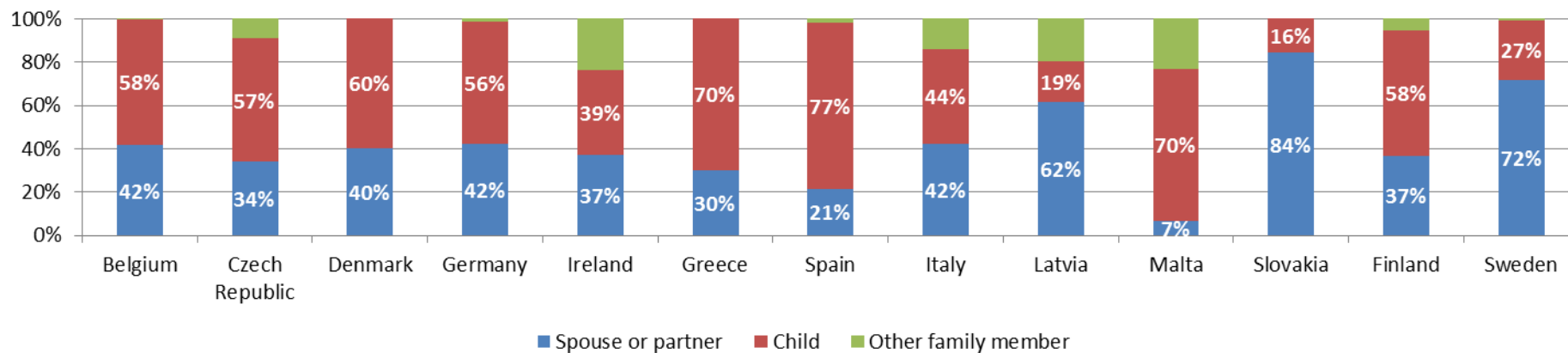
	1st	2nd	3rd
<i>Belgium</i>	Morocco 16%	Turkey 6%	Russia 5%
<i>Bulgaria</i>	Turkey 28%	Russia 25%	Ukraine 9%
<i>Czech Republic</i>	Ukraine 35%	Vietnam 20%	Russia 16%
<i>Denmark</i>	Thailand 12%	Turkey 10%	Philippines 6%
<i>Germany</i>	Turkey 17%	Iraq 8%	Kosovo 8%
<i>Ireland</i>	Somalia 18%	Iraq 16%	Nigeria/ Sudan 6%
<i>Greece</i>	Albania 84%	India 3%	Syria 2%
<i>Spain</i>	Morocco 36%	Pakistan 10%	China 10%
<i>France</i>	Algeria 18%	Morocco 17%	Tunisia 8%
<i>Italy</i>	Morocco 14%	Albania 14%	China 7%
<i>Cyprus</i>	Russia 21%	Syria 11%	Ukraine 7%
<i>Latvia</i>	Russia 62%	Ukraine 11%	Belarus 7%
<i>Lithuania</i>	Russia 38%	Belarus 25%	Ukraine 12%
<i>Hungary</i>	China 24%	USA 14%	Ukraine 8%
<i>Malta</i>	India 17%	Nigeria/ Russia/ Turkey 13%	
<i>Austria</i>	Turkey 26%	Serbia 21%	Bosnia 11%
<i>Poland</i>	Ukraine 30%	Vietnam 17%	Russia 10%
<i>Portugal</i>	Brazil 41%	Ukraine 11%	Cape Verde 11%
<i>Romania</i>	China 27%	Turkey 23%	USA 5%
<i>Slovenia</i>	Bosnia 46%	Kosovo 28%	Former Yugoslavia 12%
<i>Slovakia</i>	S. Korea 23%	Ukraine 17%	China 12%
<i>Finland</i>	Russia 26%	Somalia 10%	India 9%
<i>Sweden</i>	Iraq 17%	Thailand 10%	Somalia 6%
<i>United Kingdom</i>	India 25%	Pakistan 11%	USA 6%

**Table 11: Trends for top 10 origins of reuniting non-EU families by citizenship**

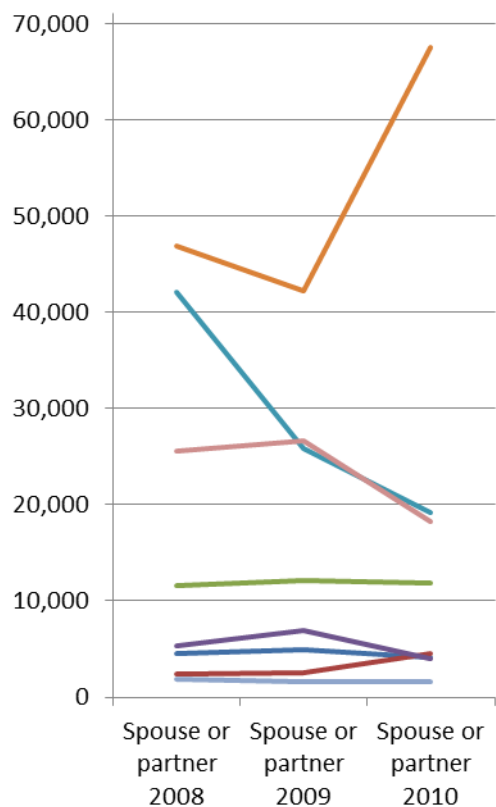


Rarely do most newcomer families in a given EU country (Table 10) come from the same country (GR, LV) or region (LT, SI). They tend to be least diverse in new countries of immigration. A few nationalities are largely limited to one EU country (FR, GR, PT). Others are spreading out to both new countries of work immigration and countries with longer histories of family immigration (Moroccan, Pakistani, Chinese and to some extent Indian and Turkish families). More families from certain nationalities are settling in the EU as new destinations like IT and ES experience family reunion (Table 11 for sampled 24 EU countries). Numbers recently went down for Turks in FR and DE, Algerians in FR, Ecuadorians and several other South Americans in ES, and Iraqis in SE.

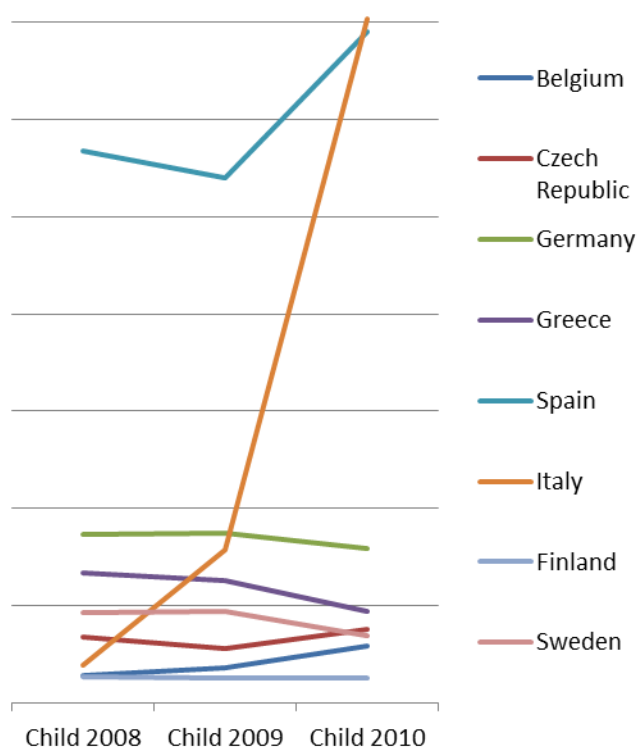
**Table 12: Composition of reuniting non-EU families in 2010**



**Table 13: Trends on reuniting spouses/partners**



**Table 14: Trends on reuniting children**



### Are most new family permit holders spouses? No.

Family reunion is not just about wives (and husbands) but about children too. The EU Family Reunion Directive affects children as much as it does spouses. Table 12 shows what percent of family permits in 2010 went to non-EU spouses or partners, children, and other family members in various EU countries. In most countries, more children arrived than spouses or partners. The numbers were more even in IE and IT. Spouses and partners made up the majority in LV, SE, and UK. Only the nuclear family is able to reunite in most countries. According to Eurostat's records, few other family members benefit from family reunion, mostly in new countries of immigration like CZ, IE, IT, LV, MT, and PT.

These trends changed little in recent years in most cases (Tables 13 and 14). Significantly more children joined their parents in ES and IT after 2009, while fewer spouses or partners arrived in ES and SE.