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**Current Immigration Debates in Europe:
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Preface and Introduction

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The Migration Policy Group (MPG) is an independent organisation committed to policy development on migration and mobility, and diversity and anti-discrimination by facilitating the exchange between stakeholders from all sectors of society, with the aim of contributing to innovative and effective responses to the challenges posed by migration and diversity.

This preface and introduction were prepared for a series of 16 country reports for the European Migration Dialogue (EMD). The EMD is a partnership of key civil society organisations dedicated to linking the national and European debates on immigration and integration. It is supported by the European Commission, Directorate-General Justice, Freedom and Security, under the INTI funding programme.

The individual reports on Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Switzerland, and the UK are available from MPG's website.

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Preface

This publication is a product of the European Migration Dialogue (EMD).

The European Migration Dialogue is a network of key civil society organisations that seeks to engage (more) stakeholders in a well-informed and constructive policy debate on EU migration and integration policies. In particular, it seeks to increase the level of information and participation among non-governmental actors working at the national level in EU Member States and associated states.

EMD partners are typically organisations that others working in the field rely on for information and support, and that have a recognised voice in public debates. They include human rights NGOs, think tanks, foundations, and service delivering organisations providing advice and support to migrants while being active in policy development as well. A list of partners is included on page 3.¹

As partners, these organisations link national debates with European debates, exchange information on the positions taken by their national governments and by non-governmental actors, and share their own assessments with each other. They meet once a year in Brussels to review the migration agenda, to identify priorities and to develop and maintain working relationships with the European institutions. In each country, the partners also co-ordinate a national network to disseminate information on EU policies, to link the European and national agendas and to strengthen the involvement of other non-governmental actors in the debates. National partners organise two meetings per year or reserve space for a workshop at their regular seminars to discuss migration policy issues including the European dimension. These meetings aim to reach a wider group of stakeholders at the national level. MPG as the international partner promotes interaction between the others and assists them by disseminating information about EU developments in the immigration and integration field.

In May 2003, MPG published the volume 'EU and US approaches to the management of immigration - Comparative perspectives'. 18 country reports reviewed the terms of the migration debates, and provided an inventory of the stakeholders in the debates and an analysis of their activities. The reports also compared the national legal framework with the proposed European measures on admission for employment, family reunion and long-term residents (pre-adoption drafts).

The current publication is to some extent an update of the 2003 reports, although the emphasis has shifted slightly away from legislative developments.² The format seeks to capture both the climate in which migration policy-making is taking place, and the translation of overall policy goals into concrete programmes.

Rapporteurs are asked to refer to debates as well as to policies, and analyse the positions of government as well as of other stakeholders. A link with the EU level is established by referring to mechanisms such as the Open Methods of Coordination on Employment and Social Inclusion, and to EU legislative instruments. Because

¹ In the Czech Republic the rapporteurs are affiliated with Charles University Prague and with the Research Institute of Labour and Social Affairs.

² Some of the issues relating to legal conditions for entry and residence are taken up in the publication "Civic citizenship and immigrant inclusion – A guide for the implementation of civic citizenship policies" (Jan Niessen, María José Peiro and Yongmi Schibel, prepared for the European Migration Dialogue with support from the European Commission, March 2005).

sound policies must be based on making use of existing knowledge, and on taking into account the views of stakeholders, the reports devote a separate chapter to 'basing policies on evidence and consultation'.

The format is briefly outlined below:

Chapter 1: Making the case

Making the case for immigration involves dealing with three main issues:

- Do we need immigrants, and if yes which ones?
- Can we integrate immigrants?
- Do we harm countries of origin by admitting immigrants?

These issues give rise to three debates, which are interconnected but which can be analysed separately:

- The immigration debate
- The integration debate
- The brain drain debate

Section 1.1 - the immigration debate - asks whether governments provide a rationale for immigration policies and communicate it with stakeholders and the wider public, or whether they make a case against immigration.

Section 1.2 - the integration debate - asks whether governments acknowledge that integration can be successful, and make the case for investing in it (financially and in terms of adapting the society and its institutions to diversity). Alternatively, do governments tend to focus on integration failures to make a case against further immigration?

Section 1.3 - the brain drain debate - looks at whether governments use arguments related to brain drain to propose restrictions on immigration. Alternatively, do governments highlight and promote the development potential of migration?

Chapter 2: Basing policies on evidence and consultation

In chapter 2, rapporteurs give their assessment of whether immigration and integration policies are based on a thorough analysis, including for example, mapping exercises, research, evaluations and learning from other countries. They also comment on whether the views of stakeholders are taken into account in the conception, implementation and evaluation phases of the policy making process.

This volume covers 15 EU countries, including both 'old' and 'new' Member States, and Switzerland as an associated state. In addition, an introduction written by MPG provides some insight into the main themes addressed in the reports. More broadly, it also sets out the key conclusions drawn from the ongoing discussions within the EMD partnership over the past 18 months.

European Migration Dialogue Partner Organisations

Austria	Information and Advice Centre for Migrants
Belgium	King Baudouin Foundation with Centre d'Etudes de l'Ethnicité et des Migrations (CEDEM-ULG) and Hoger Instituut voor de Arbeid (HIVA-KUL)
Denmark	Danish Institute for Human Rights
Finland	Finnish Refugee Advice Centre with CEREN, Centre for research on ethnic relations and nationalism, University of Helsinki
Germany	DGB Bildungswerk with Interkultureller Rat (Intercultural Council)
Greece	Hellenic League for Human Rights with KEMO, Minority Groups Research Centre
Hungary	Research Group on International Migration and Refugees, Research Institute on Minority Issues, Hungarian Academy of Sciences
Ireland	NCCRI (National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism)
Italy	C.I.E. (Centro di Iniziativa per l'Europa)
Luxembourg	ASTI (Association de Soutien aux Travailleurs Immigrés)
Netherlands	FORUM (Institut voor Multikulturele Ontwikkeling)
Poland	CSM (Center for International Relations) ISP (Institute for Public Affairs)
Portugal	Centre for Geographic Studies, University of Lisbon with Luso-American Foundation (Fundação Luso-Americana)
Spain	CIDOB Foundation (Fundació CIDOB) Ortega y Gasset Foundation (Fundación José Ortega y Gasset)
Switzerland	SFM (Swiss Forum for Migration and Population Studies)
UK	UKREN (UK Race and Europe Network) IAS (Immigration Advisory Service)
International partner	MPG (Migration Policy Group)

Introduction

1. The reports included in this publication provide a 'snap-shot' of the current migration debates in 16 European countries. They have been prepared for the European Migration Dialogue and are all unique, revealing different trends as witnessed by the rapporteurs, all of whom work on migration issues in either non-governmental organisations or academia, and all actively participate in national and European policy debates. This introduction draws out some of the trends in the reports, raises some questions and puts forward some ideas for further consideration.
2. In the preface of the last set of European Migration Dialogue country reports it is stated that unlike North America, Europe does not consider immigration as a matter of national interest. The preface also noted that 'while the North American approach is to maximise the benefits and minimise the drawbacks of migration, Europe focuses on restriction and prevention.' The approaches were said to reflect both public attitudes and (then) current debates.³
3. Today, countries across Europe are concerned about the sustainability of their social models, and the challenges associated with stagnating economies, rising unemployment, skills and labour shortages and ageing populations. In this climate, it appears there is a growing acceptance of the idea that immigration and immigrants might contribute positively, cushioning the impact of these problems now and in the future. Consequently, there is a growing interest in how to best maximise the advantages and minimise the disadvantages that immigration might create. This makes the migration debates more promising as immigrants are pictured as *future citizens* who have the ability to make a valuable contribution to society.
4. There is also an increasing understanding across Europe about the inseparability of immigration from integration. There can be no doubt that successful immigration policies rely heavily on the successful integration of immigrants. When immigrants contribute to the economy and when they find their way in society, the immigrants' case can be made much more convincingly. In light of this, it is important that policy makers understand that *immigration policies* impact significantly on integration. Targeted recruitment, creative assessments of skills, equal treatment and facilitating professional mobility enhance immigrant integration potential. Economic arguments can thus firmly underpin immigration and integration policies.
5. The integration debate is extremely complex as it is not only about immigrants, but also about the society into which immigrants are to be incorporated. Some debates highlight the forces of globalisation and the incapacity of traditional societal arrangements to cope with the consequences of globalisation (it is important here to keep the reform of the welfare state argument in mind). In other debates the emphasis is more on values and how, against the backdrop of individualism and secularism, people holding different values can live together (the European values argument).

³ Jan Niessen and Yongmi Schibel, EU and US approaches to the management of immigration. Comparative perspectives (MPG, 2003). The current set of EMD country reports does not include a comparative analysis with North America. A parallel project compared Europe and North America. See Jan Niessen and Yongmi Schibel (eds.), *Immigration as a Labour Market Strategy: European and North American Perspectives* (MPG, 2005).

6. Where the idea that integration has failed is dominant, the debates tend to attribute this failure in varying degrees to immigrants or to society. In the former case, policies are considered to have been too soft and paternalistic and new policies are proposed, making immigrants more responsible for their integration (with integration contracts and various compulsory measures). In the latter case, policies are considered to have been inadequate and new policies are proposed, which address the socio-economic disadvantages of particular groups (mobilisation and emancipation). In both cases there is a need to make clear the distinction between 'newcomers' and 'settled' migrants, between younger and older migrants, and between women and men.
7. Equality remains the corner stone in European integration policies and national anti-discrimination policies have been reinforced with the adoption of European standards. This approach, summarised as the individual rights approach, is complemented by a pro-active equality approach (positive action and equality impact assessments). Strategies are designed to open-up mainstream institutions, allowing for the full participation of immigrants, just as public and private service providers begin to tailor their services to the needs of a diverse population. This moves the debates away from the more ideological discussions about integration models (traditional notions of assimilation versus multiculturalism) to the more pragmatic discussions about active citizenship.
8. Migration has also emerged as a topic on the foreign policy agenda, and the foreign relations dimension of migration is now starting to be considered in a number of migration debates. Two topics are receiving particular attention, namely immigrants' contribution to their country of origin through remittances and transfer of knowledge, and the drain of human resources. Both are large topics and from the country reports, it seems they haven't really established a firm foothold in immigration / integration circles yet.⁴ However, it is interesting to note that whereas brain drain is usually associated with migration's negative effect on developing countries, European countries are also beginning to fear and even suffer from it. This applies to the 'new' Member States of the European Union, which are concerned that their young and well-educated citizens will use their (still limited) free movement rights to embrace the opportunities available in the 'old' Member States. This phenomenon also applies to economically stronger Member States, which suffer from a loss of human capital as their highly-specialised workers leave for North America. The brain drain argument is often used in 'anti-immigration debates', but this raises the question: Can individual freedom be restricted for the sake of the economy?
9. Migration appears to be increasing all the time. Most countries could now be described as countries of immigration and emigration, and in some instances 'traditional immigration countries' are entering into a phase where more people are leaving than entering. A more common trend however, shows that a number of countries that have traditionally experienced large 'out' migration are now experiencing higher levels of 'in' migration, creating challenges for governmental and non-governmental actors in terms of their capacity to deal with this new phenomenon (will these new 'receiving countries' treat

⁴ The rapporteurs were asked to look at the brain drain debates because remittances and transfer of knowledge have been the topic of a separate project. See Jan Niessen and Yongmi Schibel (eds.), *International migration and relations with third countries: European and US approaches* (MPG, 2004).

immigrants the same way they expect their expatriates to be treated abroad?). Among immigrants there are persons who have cultural or ethnic ties with their chosen country of immigration. This is the case, for example, when either they or their ancestors emigrated from that country, or where due to shifting frontiers, persons - without migrating - become citizens of another country and then 'move back to their country of origin'.

10. In some instances these 'returning migrants' receive favourable treatment and are even encouraged to 'immigrate'. This is a rather delicate issue because of the racial and ethnic overtones in some debates, based on preferential treatment of certain 'cultural' categories of immigrants. These categories may include citizens from former colonies, or from countries with the same set of values or religion. Immigrant selection based on values - often defended as facilitating integration - opens the door to direct and indirect discrimination and was abandoned by traditional immigration countries such as Australia, Canada and the US, and replaced by selection based on family ties and labour market criteria.
11. In some countries, immigration numbers are still relatively low, while in others the numbers seem almost unmanageable. In the latter case the government may appear to lack control, making immigration an attractive topic for opposition parties during election campaigns. The extension of free movement rights to citizens of 'new' Member States and Switzerland is a recurrent issue on political agendas. As with previous enlargements, there are fears of significant migratory movements leading to more or less restrictive transitory measures. In some countries the issue of the free movement of service providers has further stirred the debates.
12. Migration debates are often emotionally charged. Sometimes they are plagued by fear about the real or perceived negative consequences of immigration, on job security, the quality of public services, or broader and more diffuse consequences for society as a whole. Many debates suffer from a lack of understanding about why people migrate and there is also much confusion about the difference between immigration and asylum. In addition, there is a considerable amount of frustration about policies: about the way they are implemented and whether they meet the stated objectives. Indeed, the stated goals of migration control and immigrant integration are often considered as not entirely, or entirely not, achieved. Governments are sometimes accused of lending their ears too much to pro-immigration interest groups and of not paying enough attention to those who are harmfully affected by immigration (in particular the socio-economically disadvantaged).
13. Sometimes small incidents ignite debates, which produce and reproduce stereotypes of immigrants as being untrustworthy, in this way demonstrating the vulnerability of the immigrant population. The recent terrorist attacks in the US, Madrid and London have had a tremendous influence on the perception of immigrants, particular those from Muslim countries. Moroccan immigrant workers and fellow citizens with a Muslim background are increasingly seen primarily as Muslims, and Islam is associated with backwardness and terrorism. The media is also engaged in shaping debates and one might argue that it is focusing more and more on providing 'opinions' instead of 'reporting'. Because of this, governmental and non-governmental actors are dedicating more time to designing media strategies to counterbalance the influence of journalists.

14. Broadly, migration debates range in topics, political importance, tone and maturity.

Demographic concerns

15. The idea of implementing a policy of replacement migration has been firmly rejected in Europe. Instead, most European countries hope to off-set demographic decline with family-friendly policies and active-ageing measures. Most groups working on immigration (governments included) are focusing on how immigration can contribute as *part* of the policy mix. From this perspective one could argue in favour of more relaxed and liberal immigration measures.
16. There are marked differences between countries as far as the causes of population imbalances are concerned, and in terms of policies designed to address them. There is, however, scope for a degree of European co-operation, which would enable policy makers to discern common trends, share best practices and design common approaches (for example, by adopting population strategy guidelines).
17. While some of the country reports demonstrate an acute awareness of the demographic challenges that lie ahead, for the most part, the focus is shifting towards (often closely related) economic challenges, which are more immediate and which will become increasingly critical in the future.

Economic arguments

18. Arguments about the economic need (or not) for immigration vary significantly from country to country. Some countries maintain that immigration is vital for the economy and future prosperity, while in others immigration is not considered because of economic stagnation and, perhaps more often, due to high rates of unemployment. Regardless of this, there can be no doubt about the increasing importance given to economic and labour market arguments – in varying degrees, and in a positive or negative fashion.
19. Arguments in favour of immigration maintain that it is essential for economic sustainability, growth and innovation by filling labour and skills shortages, increasing human capital and through the extra contributions immigrants might make to the welfare state (particularly pension funds). Arguments against immigration maintain that it would delay modernising the economy, increase unemployment rates, promote a favourable climate for ‘social dumping’ and put a higher demand on public benefits.
20. Again however, while the economic input into the migration debates appears to be more positive in some countries and less positive in others, the picture is not completely clear. A number of country reports reveal the adoption of restrictive measures alongside measures to attract immigrants. The former concern refugees, asylum seekers and family members, the latter skilled migrants and increasingly students. Whereas the first group is considered to be a burden (and difficult to integrate), the second group is deemed to be vital for the economy (and easier to integrate).
21. Consequently, in many countries immigration policies are a mixture of tough asylum and family reunion policies and ‘recruitment-type strategies’ for those immigrants that are ‘preferred’. Restrictive policies appear to be reasonably

successful given, for example, the drop in numbers of accepted refugees in recent years (which, incidentally, cannot be attributed to dramatic improvements in safety, freedom and democracy in the world). However, overall the effectiveness of migration management is still to be proven.

22. One thing remains certain, highlighting immigrants' contribution to the economy makes their case stronger. It also puts more rationality into the debates - it makes sense to look for people that are needed.
23. The challenge is to avoid having different groups of immigrants played off against each other, creating a situation where there are more people wanting to immigrate than countries are willing or able to admit and integrate them. This is not only a matter of choosing between those who are economically useful and those who are not, but more critically, it is important to take into consideration those who are in need of, and entitled to, international protection (and those who are not).

Migration management

24. Migration management addresses qualitative and quantitative needs in different sectors, and at regional and national levels. The most prominent positive debates focus on the highly skilled segment of the economy. In these debates, 'skills' can include multiple human capital characteristics including qualifications, work experience, language proficiency, and more. High-skilled migrants can contribute to the economy. In 'low wage sectors' there are also shortages, many of which have developed due to the unwillingness of resident workers to undertake certain low-skilled, low-status and low-paid work. In addition, early retirement and ageing are generating an increased demand for services in both the high skilled and 'low wage' sectors. Labour market mismatches can therefore exist in the high skilled and the low skilled ends of the labour market. These mismatches create a situation in which high vacancy-rates coexists with substantial levels of unemployment.
25. Countries use different mechanisms for identifying and projecting shortages, relying on statistical analysis and forecasting or employers' surveys among other tools. From an analysis of labour market shortages and mismatches, profiles can be drawn to establish the types of workers needed in the economy. These profiles can take into account different characteristics, some specific (to a certain occupation, for instance) and some more general. Europe's employment strategy emphasises in addition to skills development and employability, flexibility and adaptability as means to increase productivity. Immigrant workers and immigrant entrepreneurs will often display a range of these attributes.
26. However, it should be acknowledged that it is difficult to make a reliable assessment of shortages, and any projections may be short-lived in a rapidly changing economic environment. The ability to identify and fill shortages is extremely difficult because of the time lag between identifying a shortage and finding, processing, and relocating a worker to fill the shortage - the economy (and needs) always changes. In addition, the geographic, industrial and occupational mobility of immigrants once admitted makes the relationship between predicted gaps and the filling of vacancies even more uncertain.
27. The countries explored in this publication use different recruitment strategies. Some are employer-led with limited interference from government. Others

involve tri-partite consultation between employers, trade unions and local, regional and national governments. There are even recruitment procedures involving officials in countries of origin. The methods differ in their ability to achieve the set objectives and in costs required to achieve them.

28. It is interesting to note that in most countries the national employment action plans, prepared in the framework of the European Employment Strategy, hardly touch on immigration. It would seem that at national level the European Employment Strategy is not really used as a vehicle to assess immigration needs. This is reflected in the joint employment reports, which contain few recommendations and guidelines for migration.
29. There is a growing interest in student migration. Students contribute financially to educational institutions and to the economy more broadly (the 'multiplier effect' of money spent in the local economy). They often work in tourist industries on a part-time basis and they generally accept irregular hours. However, there are still a number of restrictions on students' ability to change their residence status after completing their studies (they are often not entitled to stay). These restrictions may be reconsidered in light of the growing desire to develop 'highly skilled workforces'. What is more, the inclusion of students in the labour market might actually be easier because there should be no issues relating to recognition of qualifications or language problems.
30. All countries use a legal framework to assess whether or not a potential immigrant meets pre-determined admission criteria. Once a person has met the conditions required, they are granted legal status for a limited or unlimited period of time (through residence and/or work/study permits). Those who fail, or bypass, the tests may still find their way into the labour market and society, and become 'legalised' at a later stage (by participating in a regularisation campaign or an amnesty).
31. The legal framework is constantly changing, and the changes often reflect wider developments in Europe. 'New' EU Member States had to incorporate the so-called *acquis communautaire* before accession, which in some cases put migration (control) on the national agenda for the first time. All Member States are obliged to transpose the adopted Directives on family reunion, long term-residence and 'migration for study purposes'.
32. Decision-making on these matters at European level is still lacking transparency and the European Parliament has only limited powers. This partly explains why a relatively small number of organisations monitor and are capable of influencing the decision-making process. The transposition of the adopted legal immigration measures is monitored at the national level by non-governmental organisations, often in a defensive manner and with the aim of avoiding the further lowering of minimum standards.
33. Traditionally, 'legislation' is the responsibility of Justice and Home Affairs Ministries, many of whom have come under considerable pressure from interest groups pushing for more transparent immigration procedures and the removal of 'red tape'. Human rights organisations are advocating rights-based policies and Social Affairs Ministries try to ensure that policies take into consideration the effect immigration can have on society as a whole. In many cases it is not so much the different political colours of governments, but the

different ministries of one and the same government, that lead to different approaches to immigration and immigrant integration.

34. Employers (more than trade unions) have been the main instigators and drivers of the economic migration debates. When they advocate for more liberal immigration and family-reunion policies, migrant associations and human rights organisations join forces with them, but in many cases this alliance is short-lived, particularly when issues relating to workers rights are put on the agenda. In debates on immigrant integration, employers seem to be largely absent.

Migration management or labour market management

35. There are limits to the management of migration. This is clearly demonstrated by the fact that people migrate and find jobs regardless of governmental policies. This is most evident in countries with significant numbers of irregular migrants. Regularisations have been conducted in many countries - on greater or smaller scale, and at differing intervals. Because of their widespread use, they might be considered a policy option deserving of sets of common rules at the European level.
36. The broader immigration policies (the management of migration) in countries that have recently regularised irregular migrants do not appear to be very different from policies adopted in other countries. However, a notable criticism that should be addressed relates to immigration quotas that are not sufficient to meet demand. In such an environment, employers turn sooner or later, on a smaller or larger scale, to those who are available. And they deal with the 'legalities' later (if at all).
37. The term 'migration management' seems to suggest migration control, when in reality the movement of people can only be helped or hindered to a greater or a lesser degree. Because people move to embrace opportunities when and where they arise, policies can only - at best - respond to challenges as they emerge. However, if countries were to find a way to better anticipate future needs, they could respond to challenges *before* they arise. Perhaps one of the biggest challenges in this respect is to develop a thorough analysis not only of the high skilled sectors of the economy, but more importantly perhaps, the 'low wage' sectors, where the contributions of workers are often under-valued, conditions are poor, competition is rife and potential is often overlooked (particularly in terms of skills recognition). If countries could approach migration management through labour market management, the outcomes of immigration might be more positive, in terms of both the economic contribution of immigrants and their integration into society.

Family migration

38. In the current debates, family reunification is no longer considered as first and foremost an integration instrument (stable families promote cohesive societies), but as a less desirable form of immigration, and on top of that, it is one that is largely out of control of government. Therefore, the discussions in most countries focus on the definition of family: who belongs to a family and for how long? How extended is a family (does it include persons in an ascending line or also others) and how long are children part of a nuclear family. Are there age limits for marriages?

39. In many countries, governments operate on the basis of the assumption that the system for family reunion is being abused. Consequently, the trend is to combat fraudulent marriages and adoptions, to restrict the family members eligible, and to make the 'sponsor' (the resident hoping to be joined by his/her family) financially responsible for the welfare of the family. Other trends include reductions of the age of children eligible to apply, and an increase of the age at which marriage partners become eligible to apply.
40. Family migrants are considered less likely to integrate and they are often seen as an economic burden. This is, however, partly of governments' own making as there are many restrictions on economic participation and mobility. Policies on the family reunion of immigrants should be reviewed and firmly linked with new family policies, which are adopted at the national and European levels (in the fields of gender equality, work-life balance, life long learning of competences and anti-poverty).

Impact assessments

41. The impact of immigration is multi-dimensional and it affects the whole economy and the whole of society. It is therefore important to carry out impact assessments looking at the effect immigration has had both in the past (evaluative impact assessments), and in the future (prospective impact assessments). Immigration should be measured in terms of its impact on employment, wages and broader fiscal developments. In many countries, careful impact assessments have not been carried out in all of these areas. In other countries, competing studies reach different results.
42. Most assessments conclude that the overall economic effect of immigration is small, but there are clear winners and losers in the immigration process – groups that experience more significant impacts. Employers and high-skilled workers in the receiving country are believed to profit from low-skilled immigrants, whereas low-skilled workers – often already resident migrants - are put at a disadvantage. Both high- and low-skilled workers can profit from high-skilled immigrants. Overall, however, the benefits of immigration are greater the more complementary the characteristics of immigrants and residents.