

**Immigration, integration and demographic forecasts
in the European Context: conclusions and implications
of the Report of the French *Commissariat général du Plan***

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After experiencing numerous and varied migrations, France suspended the influx of further permanent migrant workers in 1974. However, by the end of the year 2000, after three years of economic growth, the question of immigration and the relation between integration and the labour market occupied centre stage in numerous public debates. The prevalent concept within the departments reporting to Prime Minister Lionel Jospin was that these questions merited consideration and dialogue at the public level. Demographic perspectives required an analysis of the contribution of migrant workers in alleviating the impact of future trends. However this debate was not to be allowed to hide the persisting need to analyse the integration of past migrants' children and newly arrived immigrants. Neither should it prevent the continued study of the impact of immigration on the development of both the countries of origin and the host countries, as well as the consequences of the control of

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migratory flows provided for under the Amsterdam Treaty. The task of assessing the situation was entrusted to the Commissariat général du Plan, which, since 1998, "as part of the process of preparing government decisions has been responsible to the Prime Minister for coordinating a forward-looking, strategic analysis which concentrates socioprofessional opinion and helps programme and evaluate public policy". On 27 November 2000, the Prime Minister instructed the Commissariat général du Plan¹ to organize a seminar involving government officials and social partners within France to collect and debate the relevant data and analyses. The seminar was open to the major employees' and employers' organisations as well as to a variety of partners (associations of elected public representatives, international organisations). The Commissariat's commissioner (J-M. Charpin) entrusted the Presidency of the seminar to F. Héran, Director of the Institut National d'études Démographiques (National Institute of Demographic Studies)² because it was, indeed, the conflicting opinions concerning demographic questions that lay at the heart of the debates and problems that the seminar was intended to assess.

Immigration, the demographic outlook and the economic situation

The UN report, published in January 2000, on replacement immigration in countries experiencing falling birth rates coupled with an increase in life expectancy (Grinbalt-Chamie report) was the subject of widespread questioning³. It was difficult to understand what the authors of this report were aiming to achieve: one of the objectives of this exercise in demographic forecasting was the maintenance of the ratio of workers to retirees within the European Union, and the results revealed the

¹ In english, "Strategic Planning Commission".

² Héran François (president), Aoudaï Maryse, Richard Jean-Luc (spokespersons), *Immigration, marché du travail et intégration*, Paris, La documentation française – Commissariat général du Plan, 2002 (available at: <http://www.ladocumentationfrancaise.fr/BRP/024000590/0000.pdf>).

³ See the contribution of Didier Blanchet in the report of the Commissariat général du Plan ("Immigration et avenir démographique", pp. 359-365) and the United Nations, Population Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *Replacement migration: is it a solution to declining and ageing population?*, New York: United Nations, 2000, 143 p (<http://www.un.org/esa/population/migration/migration.htm>).

impossibility, in practical terms, of achieving this objective⁴. France, furthermore, enjoys a demographic situation in which the net annual immigration figure of 100,000 people is almost enough to ensure the renewal of the country's population for decades to come, unlike several of its European neighbours. The "scissors effect", which combines a steep rise in immigration with a sharp drop in birth rates, is not found in France, unlike in Germany, Italy or Spain. Of all the major European countries, France is the only one that might be able to maintain the level of its working-age population over the next half century, provided that birth rates remain close to replacement and it continues to welcome immigrants at the rate of approximately 120,000 per year net (arrivals minus departures).

In the decades to come, it will not be possible to maintain the ratio of 15 to 64 year-olds to 65+ year-olds unchanged at the level it was assessed in 1995 (when the ratio was 4.4 : 1). This would require an end to the relative aging of the working population, which is an unavoidable phenomenon as the baby-boom generation moves into retirement and life expectancy increases. As the UN's demographic experts have shown, if we were to rely exclusively on immigration to achieve this objective, the Europe as a whole would require 1.4 billion immigrants between 1995 and 2050, with 94 million of these landing in France !

Furthermore, the assertion that immigration alone cannot solve the problem of financing state pension funds needs to be relativised by the fact that new arrivals are simultaneously additional contributors. 60,000 new arrivals per year over a period of 10 years corresponds to an average of 300,000 additional contributors (i.e. $600,000 / 2$). This represents a far from negligible contribution during a transitional period.

⁴ Richard Jean-Luc, "Trente Glorieuses: quand les immigrés devaient rapporter", *Hommes & Migrations*, n° 1221, 1999, p. 24.

From the outset, the opposed nature of the analyses was inherent to the Commissariat's reflections and formed the object of the debates and viewpoints advanced by the speakers at the seminar. Lionel Jospin himself had indicated, in his letter of instruction that the debate "on the contribution made by immigration in attenuating the impact of future trends" with regard to the demographic outlook should not "hide the persistence of questions relating to the integration of the descendants of earlier generations and first generation new arrivals on the consequences of developments of the migratory flow controls provided for by the Amsterdam Treaty" (letter of instruction issued by Lionel Jospin on 27 November 2000).

On 27 December 2000, the Paris Chamber of Trade and Industry published a report recommending the "*impatriation of employees*" due to the weakness of the available workforce in sectors such as the new information and telecommunications technologies, insurance, banking, hotels and catering, the agri-food industry, metal-working and building and public works. In 1999, Jean-Louis Giral, former president of the CNPF⁵, and Denis Gautier-Sauvagnac, delegate general of the metal-working industry's employers' association, had already drawn attention to "*the need to renew the stock of foreign labour*". Somewhat removed from this general discussion, the government had already facilitated, by way of an exception, the arrival of IT specialists and nurses due to localised shortages in these sectors.

As soon as the early-warning signs of a slowdown in the economy were observed, the Mouvement des entreprises de France (French Business Association)⁶ — after initially lending its support for a short period to the position adopted by the Paris Chamber of Trade and Industry (CCIP)— relativised its assessment of the problem of recruitment, a path which the CCIP itself was subsequently to follow. The MEDEF broke step with the CCIP, while the experts in the CCIP's research centres, who had been asked to contribute to the strategic planning seminar, produced a clear analysis of the issues, stressing France's duty to train the

⁵ Conseil national du patronat français (French National Employers' Association), now renamed MEDEF, Mouvement des entreprises de France.

⁶ MEDEF is the main organisation representing employers in France.

children of immigrants and new arrivals⁷. Furthermore, the Commissariat général du Plan's group responsible for forecasting the development of professions and qualifications was also considering these topics⁸ and it would have been justifiable for the problem of the links between the working population and immigration to be treated more thoroughly within this framework. On the contrary, it proved impossible to reduce the questions of immigration, the labour market and integration to this sole analysis of future labour requirements. By setting their sights beyond the uncertainties of the economy, the participants at the Commissariat général du Plan's "Immigration" seminar remained faithful to the Commissariat's long-term view based on immigration from Italy, China, Turkey, Eastern Europe and Mali⁹.

The concept of a "shortfall in working-age population", as if there were not already more than two million unemployed in France (as if a population could be negative in the same way as a cash deficit), disappeared along with the central concerns. Immigration has to be considered as a structural fact of French society and therefore of the country's economy. However, one will search in vain for any major effects of recent flows on the dynamics of the economy. In their report, Denis Fougère and Pierre Cahuc present a detailed review of the studies of the links between immigration and economic growth¹⁰ (review of the literature, centering on the work undertaken by Borjas, Chiswick, and Freeman, the latter having made an important contribution to the volume¹¹). Beyond a limited number of effects on local employment

⁷ Cf. Deneuve Carole, "Besoins de main-d'œuvre des entreprises et recours à l'immigration: quelles perspectives ?", pp. 367-400.

⁸ The report was made public on 4 December 2002. See *Libération* of 5-12-2002.

⁹ See the contributions by Blanc-Chaléard Marie-Claude, "L'immigration des travailleurs italiens en France (1850-1970)", pp. 157-165; Ma Mung Emmanuel, "La complexité des migrations des populations d'origine chinoise", pp. 179-194; Tapia Stéphane de, "Migration transnationale et entrepreneuriat migrant: le cas turc", pp. 167-178; Tinguay Anne de, "L'ouverture du Rideau de fer: la France peu concernée", pp. 195-202; Azam Jean-Paul; Gubert Flore, "Ceux de Kayes: l'effet des transferts des émigrés maliens sur leur famille d'origine", pp. 203-230.

¹⁰ Cf. Fougère Denis, Cahuc Pierre, "Immigration, emplois et salaires (synthèse introductive)", pp. 323-336.

¹¹ See Freeman Richard B., "L'immigration et le modèle économique américain: la main-d'œuvre qualifiée et non qualifiée originaire de l'immigration dans les années 1990 aux États-Unis", pp. 337-358; Abowd, John M. and Richard B. Freeman (eds.), *Immigration, Trade, and the Labor Market*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1991.

areas, it appears that there is no strong link between unemployment in the native labour force and the scale of immigrant arrivals which, in contrast, is linked to short and long-term growth dynamics. To be a destination for immigration is an advantage within the international economic system which generates a global system of migration.

Immigration: a highly sensitive public policy issue

When the seminar was initiated, many economists, demographic experts and public policy specialists considered it to be essential to take account of the scale of unemployment in the analysis of desirable public policies¹², combined with a reflection concerning public policy vis-à-vis immigrants and their descendants and the categories of analyses that could be used to pursue the associated studies¹³. Furthermore, Roger Fauroux, former minister and President of the Haut-conseil à l'intégration (High Council for Integration, another body acting at Prime Ministerial level which drafts an annual report on the integration of foreign nationals, naturalised immigrants and their descendants) stressed the need to consider how to smooth the way for immigrants and their descendants at the social level, by aiding in their integration, by making civil service employment opportunities available to them and by devoting adequate resources to the fight against discrimination. The middle-way approach desired by Lionel Jospin and the majority of high-ranking civil servants and university specialists with regard to this subject counterbalanced the somewhat utilitarian view of these questions articulated by the various participants at the seminar (former human resources director of a major private French group involved on the seminar's committee, industrial employers), some of whom were even active

¹² See the foreword by J.-M. Charpin, Commissaire au Plan, in the CGP Report, and the survey conducted by M. Croissandeau regarding the CGP seminar published by *Le Nouvel Observateur*, 19-25 April 2001, p. 26-27.

¹³ See Richard Jean-Luc; Tripier Maryse, "Quelle intégration ? Synthèse introductive", pp. 285-295; Héran François, "Les immigrés et leurs descendants dans le système statistique français: quelques réflexions sur les pratiques et les principes", pp. 121-133.

on the seminar's organising committee. As the sessions of the Commissariat général du Plan's seminar progressed, various issues which appeared to be located at the heart of public policy considerations grew in importance. The publication to which the seminar gave rise reflects this. R. Silberman, M. Glaude and C. Borrel stressed the social difficulties encountered by immigrants and their children¹⁴. Immigrants and their children are integrated rapidly, whatever their country of origin, in the fields of linguistic practice, culture and leisure activities, and demographic behaviour. This is in striking contrast with the difficulties they experience in achieving integration in the labour market, associated with the erosion of employment during the 1980s and 1990s. However, this problem primarily affects immigrants from North Africa whereas it is still unknown to immigrants of Portuguese origin. This distinction is a strong indication - though not yet proof - of the existence of discrimination by employers on the basis of national origin. The report poses the question of the conditions under which the French public statistics offices are able to study the phenomena of integration and discrimination. It is well known that it refuses to talk in terms of ethnic descent along the US/British model in order to designate groups of immigrants having the same national or cultural origin. This position of principle is reaffirmed in the report but, contrary to a widespread misconception, does not mean that the public statistical office is unable to conduct the necessary studies concerning social and professional integration and discrimination. In effect, even if they are little used, the underlying data necessary to identify immigrants by their country of origin is available from standard censuses and surveys, whereas information relating to the origins of parents is accessible via the surveys and specialised research files which have all received the approval of the Conseil national de l'information statistique (National Council for Statistical Information, CNIS) and the Commission nationale de l'informatique et des libertés (National Commission for Information Technology and Civil Liberties, CNIL). Research backs up these conclusions¹⁵. If one wanted to go

¹⁴ Cf. Silberman Roxane, "Les enfants d'immigrés sur le marché du travail: les mécanismes d'une discrimination sélective", pp. 297-310; Glaude Michel; Borrel Catherine, "Les immigrés et leurs descendants sur le marché du travail: un regard statistique", pp. 105-119.

¹⁵ Richard Jean-Luc, "Une approche de la discrimination sur le marché du travail: les jeunes adultes issus de l'immigration étrangère en France", communication at the CGP

further and ask, for example, about the role of physical characteristics in discrimination, the law of 1978 permits the inclusion of sensitive questions provided both that they are relevant to the object of the research and that the questioned parties give their express permission.

Professor F. Gaudu, though a legal specialist with a deep attachment to national sovereignty, was able to show, for his part, how national employment legislation and immigration laws have developed from the protection of nationals to the protection of residents, independently of their nationality. In his summary, he recalled that developments at European Community level have been inspired by national traditions without, however, failing to adhere to legislation that is more general and international in scope¹⁶. It would be reductionist to consider the contribution of the demographer L. Legoux concerning the right of asylum¹⁷ as being contradictory to the analysis proposed by F. Gaudu. By presenting an analysis which stresses the fragility of the rights granted to asylum seekers and by positioning his analysis within the dynamics of international geopolitics, the presentation of which could naturally be debated, L. Legoux, an observer who is aware of critical analyses of national immigration policies, proposed a position which cannot be ignored by those who wield State power in the future. The events at the centre for refugees and illegal immigrants at Sangatte, a place of accommodation for applicants for emigration to Great Britain, were frequently mentioned during the seminar and a number of public decision-makers manifested their interest in possible solutions, thus emphasizing the importance of the questions raised by Luc Legoux. Complementing this presentation, the British demographer Jay Winter, author of a much cited work on the links between

Seminar, 16 March 2001, published in *Revue Européenne des Migrations Internationales*, vol. 16, n° 3, December 2000-March 2001, p. 53-83, published in English: "Unemployment Among Young People of Foreign Origin in France: Ways of Measuring Discrimination", p. 101-135 in OFS/BFS (eds.), *On the Way to a Multicultural Society ?*, Bern, Swiss Federal Statistical Office, 1997.

¹⁶ Cf. Gaudu François, "Le séjour et la situation sur le marché du travail: aspects juridiques (synthèse introductive)", pp. 233-243.

¹⁷ Cf. Legoux Luc, "La crise du droit d'asile en France: des droits de l'homme à la raison d'État", pp. 273-282.

ideological standpoints and demographic policies¹⁸, emphasized the importance of long-term trends, national traditions, and the anxieties that have emerged as the result of the events of 11 September 2001¹⁹. The report thus evokes sensitive subjects such as nationalism and natalism within French demographic research.

In a context in which the future of the Commissariat général du Plan is being profoundly questioned (even if it frequently succeeds in attracting high-level, external authors, many people think, not without reason, that the persistence of many of its permanent staff, quite independently of any staff alternation, constitutes a problem for a body responsible for advising successive Prime Ministers), the collated knowledge presented in this volume has been welcomed by members of parliament of all persuasions as well as by press publications from all sides, from *L'Humanité*, the communist daily, to *Figaro*, France's most popular right-wing daily newspaper²⁰. Publication was approved by Jean-Pierre Raffarin's cabinet as soon as it arrived in Matignon. Curiously, the National Front concluded from the report that France requires no further immigration ("except for 120,000 per year according to this report!", it nevertheless proclaimed). In effect, the key fact of which this report reminds us is the structural nature of the many flows of immigration towards France: workers and future workers, foreign students who should be welcomed more readily at a time of competition between nations²¹, spouses of nationals and residents to whom rights have been granted, exiled freedom fighters. Fundamentally, it is necessary to take

¹⁸ In 1998 Jay Winter was published in *Le Nouvel Observateur*, at the height of the French debate on ethnic statistics (cf. Blum Alain, "Resistance to identity categorisation in France", p. 121-147, in Kertzer David I., Arel Dominique (eds.), *Census and Identity. The Politics of Race, Ethnicity and Language in National Censuses*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002.

¹⁹ Cf. Winter Jay, "Migrations, dynamiques démographiques et identité nationale", pp. 135-142, and Winter Jay, Teitelbaum Michael S., *A Question of Numbers: High Migration, Low Fertility, and the Politics of National Identity Since 1960*, New York, Hill and Wang Publishers, 1998.

²⁰ Cf., for example, "Immigration: vrais chiffres contre idées fausses", *Libération*, 20-11-2002.

²¹ In his summary report, François Héran emphasizes on his own behalf the value of studying the immigrant selection procedures used in Canada ("points system"); Héran François, "Les recherches sur l'immigration et l'insertion: avancées, débats, perspectives", pp. 11-102.

account of immigration as one of the parameters and elements for analysis in numerous public policies.

While it is correct to consider, along with the Catholic daily, *La Croix*, that France will have no pressing economic or demographic need for high levels of additional immigration, *Ouest-France* was correct in its headline of 20 November that stated "*France still needs immigrants*", even if there is no imperative to greatly extend the range of arrival mechanisms. Instead, it would be better to strengthen the rights of individuals who want to take up long-term residence in France: a better welcome and better training for new arrivals, a simplification of procedures for asylum seekers, easier access to French nationality and an entitlement to vote. It is in the Commissariat général du Plan's decision to limit itself in this report to a presentation of incontestable research results that we find the reason for its widespread acceptance which would not have been secured by the explicit recommendation of public policies, though undoubtedly equally useful. In January 2002, the Conseil d'analyse économique (Economic Analysis Council), another research body that advises the Prime Minister (created by Lionel Jospin in 1997), started to consider in greater detail the questions of social integration in connection with those relating to urban segregation. A working group charged with investigating "The obstacles to integration and ways of overcoming them" was set up. The president and spokesperson of the Commissariat général du Plan's group were seconded to this initiative, which, though in competition with that launched as part of the Plan, made it possible to examine issues which had unfortunately been removed from the report presented by the Commissariat général du Plan. The resulting report was presented to the new Prime Minister, Jean-Pierre Raffarin, in July 2003. It was produced at the initiative and under the Presidency of Jean-Paul Fitoussi who had become uneasy at the forms taken by "*the new age of inequality*"²². It will be up to the new government, which seems to want to establish an "integration" contract", the scope of which still has to be determined, to decide whether these reflections should now be followed by a report bearing on this latter topic.

²² Cf. Fitoussi Jean-Paul; Rosanvallon Pierre, *Le nouvel âge des inégalités*, Paris: Éd. du Seuil, 1996.

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