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Migrants from the former Soviet Union to France: a diversity of profiles

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Abstract France received several waves of migrants from the former Russian empire and the Soviet Union throughout the 20th century. Since the fall of the Iron Curtain there has been a new wave of emigration to France from the region, the volume and characteristics of which remain to be better understood. In this chapter we describe the trends and profiles of migrants from the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) to France since the start of the 1990s using different statistical sources (population census, residence permit statistics, surveys). Migrations of CIS nationals increased in the end of the 1990s and in 2015, the number of immigrants living in France reached 167 thousand (2.7% of the total immigrant population). Recent flows are characterized by a diversity of profiles, with important differences by national origin. These flows are predominantly female, particularly in the case of Russia, Belarus and Ukraine. The situations of migrants upon arrival and in the first years in France are largely determined by the reason of their migration, mainly if it was asylum related or not.

1 Introduction

Migration from the Russian Empire and later the Soviet Union to France has a long history. After Peter the Great ‘opened’ Russia to Europe in the 18th century, cultural and intellectual exchanges, as well as travels between the two societies developed (Berelowitch and Daucé 2002). The October Revolution followed by the Civil War and the instauration of a New Economic Policy (NEP) set off a first wave of large-scale migration to France composed of diverse profiles (nobility, merchants, White Army officers) with different migration projects (settlement in France, return to their country of origin) (Gousseff 1996). In the post-World War II period arrivals of former camp prisoners or persons from occupied territories in fear of returning to the Soviet Union were registered. However, they did not generally receive as warm a welcome as their predecessors (for example they were not granted a statutory refugee status, but temporary protection) and received little aid from the established emigrant community. Some of these new arrivals would eventually leave France, joining other Soviet emigrants which increasingly chose to go the United States, and later Israel and Germany. As a result, France gradually lost its position as the main destination for Soviet emigrants in the after-war period (Gousseff 2014).

Although, some of the first-wave emigrants eventually returned to the Soviet Union, many others stayed in France giving birth to the Russian (Soviet) diaspora (Gousseff 1996). It continues to have an important public presence and many studies in the French context focus on these migrants and their descendants (Nicolini 2010). The Armenian community is the second most numerous (Hovanessian 1990; Minassian 2014), but other communities from the former Soviet Union region also exist in France (De Tapia and Akgönül 2008).

Although there is evidence of a new wave of post-Soviet migration to France, relatively little is known about the profiles of these migrants. Studies on recent Russian migration (Bronnikova 2008), as well as newspaper articles (Breen 2013; Manenkov 2018), portray a young and educated group composed of students, researchers and high skilled workers. Family migrants, of which a majority are women of Russian, Belarussian and Ukrainian origin married to French nationals, also appear to be an important component of these flows (Hervouet and Schiff 2017). However, other migrants find themselves in more precarious situations upon arrival in France, such as asylum seekers or persons with no family or social networks (Guyavarch et al. 2014; Kirakosyan 2007; Mordier 2016).

Despite their increasing presence, no systematic study of this new migration wave has been conducted up until now. This situation can be due to several reasons. Migrants from the former Soviet Union (FSU) still represent a relatively small community in France: 167,000 immigrants resided in France in 2015, thus only 2.7% of the total immigrant population (INSEE 2015). They are rarely identifiable in existing statistical sources, making it difficult to analyse their profiles.¹ In addition,

¹ For example, the available population census microdata files only distinguish Russian foreigners and immigrants born in Russia (<https://insee.fr/fr/statistiques/2866354>).

unlike other established destinations (United States, Israel and Germany), France did not have policies aimed at facilitating or attracting migrants from the region. In recent years bilateral agreements regarding students and specific categories of workers have been signed with some countries (Russia, Kazakhstan). Lastly, studies on the ‘brain drain’ from the region have also focused on more coveted destinations for high-skilled migrants (OECD 2017), such as the United States and Germany (Korobkov and Zaionchkovskaia 2012).

In this context, this chapter aims at better understanding this latest wave of emigration from the FSU to France: does it resemble previous ones or present new profiles? Do these profiles resemble those of migrants in other destinations, both established and new, or are they specific to France? To answer these questions we use different statistical sources (population census, residence permit statistics, surveys) to describe the volume and profiles of these new migrants (Sect. 2 and 3), as well as their migratory trajectories and situation upon arrival in France (Sect. 4). We use the country of birth and/or nationality criteria throughout the chapter to define our population, leading to the delimitation of a target group distinct from studies using other criteria (parents’ or grand-parents’ country of birth, ethnic group, language). As throughout the book (see chapter by M. Denisenko) we primarily focus our analyses on migration from the twelve countries which initially formed the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS): Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan.

2 Migrant stocks

2.1 Volume

Nationals from the former Russian Empire, and later the Soviet Union, constituted one of the largest migrant communities in France in the first half of the 20th century (Fig. 1).² After World War II their numbers gradually declined and by 1990 only 20 thousand immigrants from the Soviet Union resided in France, a four-fold decrease from the level pre-war level in 1936.

² Prior to the introduction of the concept of ‘immigrant’ (foreign-born with a foreign nationality) in official statistics in France in 1991, migrants could be identified using the nationality criterion (foreigners or naturalized French). Although we are aware that the two populations do not overlap perfectly, to facilitate reading we refer to both groups as immigrants in this section.

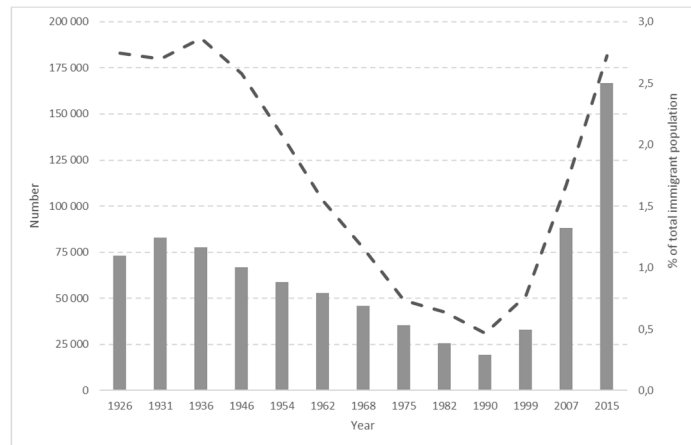


Fig. 1 Number of immigrants from the Soviet Union and the former Soviet republics residing in France, 1926-2015

Source: INSEE: population census (1926-1999). INSEE: renovated population census (2007, 2015).

For the years 1926-1975 the figure shows the sum of naturalized French and foreigners of Soviet (Russian) nationality. For the years 1982-2015 the figure shows the number of immigrants born in the Soviet Union or the former Soviet republics.

After the fall of the Soviet Union a new wave of migration from the now independent states started. By 1999 the number of immigrants from the FSU living in France reached 33,000.³ This growth accelerated in the next decades. In 2007 the number of immigrants reached 88,000 (annual increase of 13.1% in the intercensal period) (table 1). Their number almost doubled over the next eight years and in 2015 they represented 167,000 persons. The share of immigrants from the FSU in the total immigrant population in France has increased as a result, going from 0.5% in 1990 to 2.7% in 2015.

³ For comparability purposes statistics on immigrant stocks discussed in section 2.1 cover all former Soviet republics, including the Baltic countries (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania).

Table 1 Number of FSU immigrants residing in France, 1999-2015

	Number			Col (%)			Annual increase (%)	
	1999	2007	2015	1999	2007	2015	1999-2007	2007-2015
Baltic	2 700	4 500	7 700	8,2	5,1	4,6	6,6	6,9
Estonia	<1 500	<1 500	<1 500	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Latvia	<1 500	1 800	3 100	n/a	2,0	1,9	n/a	7,0
Lithuania	<1 500	2 100	3 500	n/a	2,4	2,1	n/a	6,6
Russia	15 600	37 800	66 500	47,3	42,9	39,9	11,7	7,3
Eastern Europe	7 200	19 800	41 600	21,8	22,4	24,9	13,5	9,7
Belarus	<1 500	2 600	4 200	n/a	2,9	2,5	n/a	6,2
Moldova	<1 500	4 900	16 200	n/a	5,6	9,7	n/a	16,1
Ukraine	5 700	12 300	21 200	17,3	13,9	12,7	10,1	7,0
Caucasus	6 000	22 500	44 900	18,2	25,5	26,9	18,0	9,0
Armenia	4 800	13 300	27 300	14,5	15,1	16,4	13,6	9,4
Azerbaijan	<1 500	3 100	5 500	n/a	3,5	3,3	n/a	7,4
Georgia	<1 500	6 000	12 100	n/a	6,8	7,3	n/a	9,2
Central Asia	<1 500	3 700	6 100	n/a	4,2	3,7	n/a	6,4
Kazakhstan	<1 500	<1 500	3 400	n/a	n/a	2,0	n/a	n/a
TOTAL	33 000	88 200	166 800	100	100	100	13,1	8,3

Source: INSEE: population census (1999). INSEE: renovated population census (2007, 2015).

Note: Because of statistical precision, countries with less than 1 500 persons are not disseminated.

Russians are the most numerous origin among this flow, but it has grown more diverse. The former represented 15,600 persons in 1999 (47% of FSU immigrants), but despite an increase in their absolute numbers (66,500 in 2015), their relative proportion declined (40%) (table 1). Immigrant communities from Eastern Europe and Caucasus have grown the most. Armenians remain the second most numerous group after Russians (27,300 in 2015). However, the number of immigrants from Azerbaijan and Georgia grew more rapidly in the years 1999-2015 and they both constituted several thousand persons at the end of the period. Ukrainians are the third most numerous origin (21,200 in 2015), whereas the Moldovan community experienced the highest growth in the period (16,200 in 2015). The number of immigrants from Central Asia, particularly Kazakhstan, has also increased, but they continue to be a minority (6,100 immigrants in 2015, 4% of immigrants from the FSU).

Two additional elements should be taken into account when interpreting these general trends. Firstly, certain groups – geographically mobile persons, persons in non-standard housing situations, temporary migrants or migrants in an irregular situation – are underestimated in population censuses. Given their presence among our target population (Sect. 3 and 4), it is possible that the actual number of FSU immigrants living in France at each time point is higher. Secondly, the comparison of the geographical origins of migrants in the post-Soviet period with previous ones

should be done with caution. Indeed, researchers have pointed out that the numerical importance of Russians *versus* other nationalities may in part be a 'statistical construction', with some migrants in the interwar period being categorized or self-declaring as Russians (and not Ukrainians for example) for different reasons (Gousseff 2014). Inversely, since the fall of the Soviet Union, persons with ties to the newly independent states may more often declare themselves as being from these countries (Mendikulova 2010).

2.2 Socio-demographic characteristics

Men outnumbered women among immigrants from the Soviet Union in France throughout most of the 20th century. However, their numbers grew closer at each census due to higher male mortality and absence of new entries and since 1982 female immigrants constitute the majority. Although this is also observed among the overall immigrant population in France (Beauchemin et al. 2013), their dominance is stronger among FSU immigrants: women account for 60% or more of immigrants in the period 1999-2015 (table 2).

However, there are significant differences by countries of origin. Two thirds (or more) of immigrants from Russia, Belarus and Ukraine, as well as Central Asia are female. Although flows from Moldova and the Caucasus are more balanced, women represented a majority in all four cases by the end of the period (between 50% and 55%). As we show in the following section, the sex distribution of each flow is linked to their composition in terms of migration motives (asylum *versus* other motives).

Table 2 Characteristics of FSU immigrants residing in France, 1999-2015

	Female (%)			Less than 18 (%)			60 or older (%)			Naturalized French (%)		
	1999	2007	2015	1999	2007	2015	1999	2007	2015	1999	2007	2015
Russia	66,5	64,1	64,5	13,0	24,1	22,2	32,1	10,3	8,1	47,7	35,0	36,2
Eastern Europe	63,4	64,2	60,9	8,8	14,6	12,0	40,3	11,6	5,4	45,0	34,1	31,3
Belarus	60,5	69,2	70,0	11,4	12,9	11,3	15,6	5,0	3,9	26,9	26,8	41,2
Moldova	46,5	54,6	54,7	7,6	10,5	11,7	5,3	2,3	2,2	17,7	20,3	21,1
Ukraine	65,7	66,9	63,9	8,6	16,5	12,3	47,7	16,7	8,2	50,6	41,1	37,0
Caucasus	54,1	53,1	53,6	12,6	17,7	13,7	16,0	7,5	9,8	53,5	7,5	9,1
Armenia	54,9	52,9	54,4	11,1	15,7	13,3	16,0	9,5	11,6	62,4	41,7	32,0
Azerbaijan	49,7	55,8	55,0	19,2	16,5	9,4	10,6	4,8	9,1	15,1	15,0	24,4
Georgia	51,2	52,1	51,3	18,0	22,8	16,6	17,7	4,3	6,3	21,3	20,3	22,5
Central Asia	56,2	65,7	66,2	17,4	17,4	12,5	6,5	2,4	7,4	20,1	21,5	33,8
Kazakhstan	56,9	65,1	64,0	19,2	16,0	16,3	1,6	3,4	8,5	17,0	21,4	33,2
Total	62,6	61,3	60,5	12,1	19,8	16,8	27,0	9,5	7,9	42,5	33,4	32,6

Source: INSEE: population census (1999). INSEE: renovated population census (2007-2015).

The aging of the migrant community observed throughout the second part of the 20th century due to the absence of new arrivals, has been reversed since the 1990s. Whereas in 1999 one out of four FSU immigrants was 60 years or older – with one out of three Russians and one out of two Ukrainians – this group only represented one out of 12 immigrants in 2015 (table 2). In addition, the proportion of minor immigrants (less than 18) increased in the period reaching 20% in 2007 and 17% in 2015 due to the important presence of children among recent flows.

The decrease in the overall proportion of immigrants holding French nationality – 43% in 1999, 33% in 2015 (table 2) – results from different processes. This decrease is observed for communities with the longest presence in France – Russians, Ukrainians and Armenians – since settled immigrants (who often held French citizenship) became outnumbered by recent arrivals. For example, in 1999 two out of three Armenians held French nationality, whereas in 2015 they were only one out of three. Among other flows the proportion of naturalized French remained stable (and relatively low) or slightly increased in the last period (2007-2015). Indeed, in addition to the minimum length of stay before becoming eligible to apply for citizenship, the necessary level of socio-economic integration to be successful in the application is often acquired after many more years. Spouses of French can apply for citizenship after a shorter period (currently four years).

The geographical distribution of immigrants from the FSU reflects that of previous waves. For example, in the 1926 census more than 50% of Russians lived in the Seine department (including Paris) (Gousseff 2014). In 2015, 30% of FSU immigrants lived in the greater Paris region, with higher concentration among Moldovans and Ukrainians (respectively 70% and 41% of immigrants lived there). Russians were more dispersed, with 27% in the greater Paris region, followed by Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur (11%), Rhône-Alpes (10%) and Alsace (7%). Armenians were the only group in which the most populated region was not Paris, but Rhône-Alpes (17%), a region where they have been present for a longer time (Huard 2007) and where migrants may have chosen to come given the presence of social networks (family members, associations) (Kirakosyan 2007).

3 Migration flows

We use residence permit statistics to describe migration flows from the FSU to France in the period 1994-2018.⁴ These statistics were produced and published by the French Institute for Demographic Studies for the period 1994-2008 (INED). Since 2008 they are produced by the Directorate General of Foreigners in France and published by Eurostat (Eurostat). Although the two series are based on the same source, there are differences in their coverage. Firstly, INED statistics only cover

⁴ Until recently residence permit statistics were the only available source on migration flows in France (Breem and Thierry 2006). Since 2006 the renovated population census provides alternative estimates of entries and departures from the national territory, regardless of nationality and legal status (Brutel 2014). Due to size of our target population

residence permits issued for one year or more, while Eurostat covers all durations, including between 3 and 12 months. For comparability, we limit our analysis to residence permits issued for one year or more during the entire period (sect. 3.1). Secondly, admission categories in the two sources vary due to changes in immigration policies during the period. We reorganized the data to distinguish five main reasons: international protection, family, education, work, other (table 3).

Residence permit statistics do not include certain groups of migrants. Minors are not required to hold a residence permit in France and only receive one – and thus appear in the statistics – when they reach 18 years (or 16 if they wish to work). However, minors arriving under specific procedures (accompanying asylum seekers, family reunification, international adoptees) are counted by other administrations and we present some evidence on this group (sect. 3.4). Irregular migrants not holding a residence permit do not appear in the statistics. However, this is equally the case of some regular migrants with a temporary status, for example asylum seekers who have filed an asylum application and are still waiting for a decision from OFPRA or the Appeals Court (REM France 2015).

Figures 2 and 3 present four series – total number of first residence permits, residence permits issued for international protection and issued for other reasons, as well as first-time asylum applicants – for the entire region and for the most numerous nationalities. The decision to include asylum seekers in the discussion of migration flows is due to their among flows from the FSU as we show below. In addition, some of these persons are eventually granted a residence permit for international protection or on other grounds and appear in the statistics mentioned above. Thus, we have decided to present them alongside migrants who receive a residence permit, despite their different status.

3.1 Volume

During the second half of the 20th century Soviet emigrants came to France. With the fall of the Iron Curtain flows resumed, but remained limited throughout the 1990s (figure 2). The increase of arrivals in France started increasing at the end of the decade as destination countries of FSU emigrants diversified (see chapter by M. Denisenko). The number of persons receiving a residence permit reached a maximum of 7,800 in 2005. After slowing down, the increase continued in the 2010s, albeit at a slower rate. During the period 2013-2017, 10,400 FSU nationals on average are admitted to stay in France every year.

Asylum seekers constitute an important component of this new wave of migration. The rise in the number of migrants admitted to stay in the end of 1990s, many of which are refugees, is due to the increase in the number of asylum seekers several years earlier (figure 2). Similarly, the drop in the number of asylum seekers in 2005 predicts the decrease in the number of migrants receiving a residence permit in the following years. While the number of asylum seekers has fluctuated, in part due to

the inclusion of some countries from the region in the list of ‘safe countries’⁵ in 2003, the number of persons who are granted international protection has remained stable (around 2,000 per year). Inversely, admissions for other reasons – family, education, work – are on the rise and have reached around 8,000 persons in the period 2013-2017.

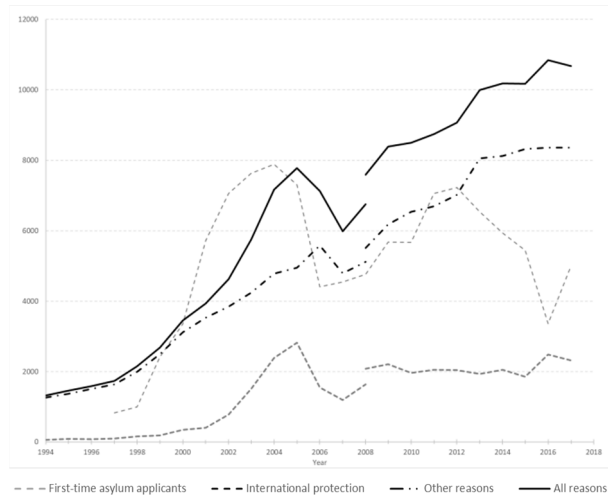


Fig. 2 Number of first-time asylum applicants and first residence permits issued to CEI nationals, 1994-2017

Source: OFPRA: first-time asylum applicants (1998-2017). INED: residence permits of one year or more (1994-2008). Eurostat: residence permits of one year or more (2008-2017). Break in time series: 2008.

We can distinguish two groups of countries with regards to the importance of asylum seekers among new arrivals (figure 3). Among flows from the three Caucasian countries, as well as Moldova (up until 2006) the number of asylum applicants is systematically higher than that of persons receiving a first residence permit. As only some are granted international protection, this situation suggests that (rejected) asylum seekers from these countries are more likely to leave France and/or stay in the country without access to a legal status (residence permit). Others may eventually be admitted on other grounds (for example family) as we show in section 4. Flows from Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Kazakhstan are more diversified as asylum applicants represent a smaller number of persons in comparison with those being issued a residence permit.

⁵ The ‘safe countries’ list was created by the law of December 10, 2003 (art. 5) allowing national authorities to refuse or examine under an ‘accelerated’ procedure asylum applications of nationals from these countries.

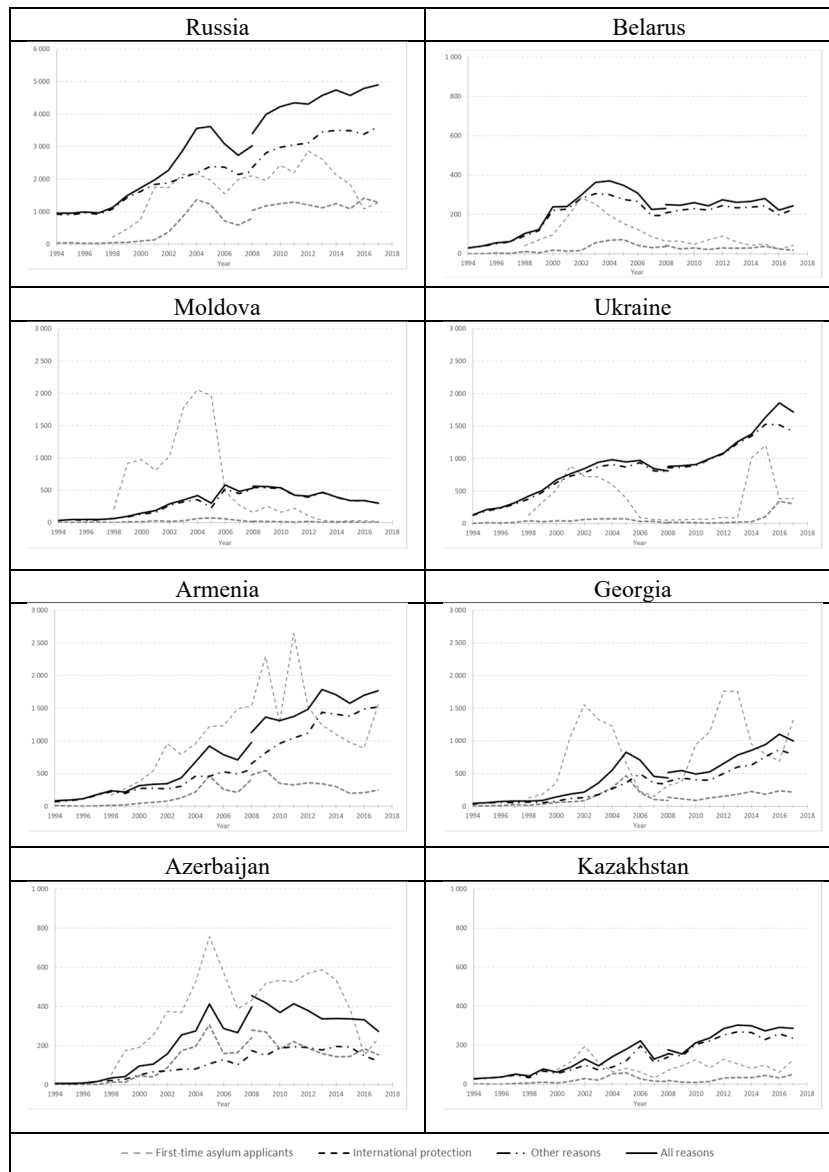


Fig. 3 Number of first-time asylum applicants and first residence permits issued to CEI nationals by nationality, 1994-2017
 Source: OFPRA: first-time asylum applicants (1998-2017). INED: residence permits of one year or more (1994-2008). Eurostat: residence permits of one year or more (2008-2017). Break in time series: 2008.

3.2 International protection

Asylum claims of FSU nationals are linked to internal political problems after the creation of independent states (access to citizenship, economic and political instability and corruption), as well as specific conflicts (Chechnya, Ukraine). During the period 1998-2017 a total of 109,000 FSU nationals filed for asylum in France, representing one out of eight first-time asylum applicants (OFPRA). Russians have constituted the largest group (35,300), and there is evidence that many of them were from Chechnya. Families with children are characteristic of this flow: for every 100 adult asylum seekers from Russia, there are 70 accompanying minors, while the corresponding figure is 45 for the entire FSU and 25 for all nationalities. In the same period, 17,600 Russians have been granted international protection, i.e. refugee status or subsidiary protection. This amounts to one out of two asylum applicants, which is a relatively high ratio compared to other origins.⁶

Armenians have been the second most numerous group of asylum seekers (23,100 in the period 1998-2017) and one half of the claims from the FSU have been from the Caucasus (48,200). Two countries from the region – Armenia and Georgia – have been listed as ‘safe countries’ at some point. Georgia was included in the initial ‘safe countries’ list (December 2003) after a rapid increase of asylum seekers in the start of 2000s and the Rose revolution. It was excluded in 2009 due to the deterioration of the situation and applications reached a new maximum of almost 1,800 in 2012 and 2013. It was again listed as ‘safe’ in December 2013. Asylum seekers from Armenia have been fewer, but as their numbers grew the country was also included in the ‘safe countries’ list in November 2009. Several hundred persons fleeing the country still arrive every year in France, despite it still being listed as ‘safe’ (except for a short period). Claims from Azeris have been fewer and they have generally had higher recognition rates.

A first wave of asylum seekers from Ukraine came after 1998 (4,300 applications between 1998 and 2005) (figure 3). However, most claims were considered to be economically motivated and thus rejected. In June 2005 Ukraine was included in the list of ‘safe countries’. After the break-out of the conflict with Russia in February 2014 it was excluded from the list and 2,200 asylum claims were made in the years 2014-2015, of which around a third resulted in the granting of international protection (790 permits in 2014-2017). Asylum claims from Moldavians peaked in the years 2004-2005 (around 2,000 persons) (figure 3). Many were made by Romanian-speaking minorities and their numbers decreased after Romania entered the EU in 2007 (OFPRA 2006). They were generally considered to be insufficiently motivated, also leading to low recognition rates. In 2011 the country was added to the list of ‘safe countries’.

Some rejected asylum seekers may later be regularized (sect. 4.1) and others may decide to leave the country. ‘Voluntary return’ programs were introduced in 1977 (Linares 2009) and at present primarily target irregular migrants or rejected

⁶ This figure is an estimation as the final recognition rate (first instance and appeals) by nationality is not published by OFPRA. The estimation is based on the comparison of the number of asylum applicants and residence permits issued for international protection by nationality.

asylum seekers. Existing statistics point to an over-representation of FSU nationals in these programs. Indeed, while the lack of information can impede the participation of potential candidates, some associations have helped to organize the returns, for example among the Armenian community (Kirakosyan 2007). In the period 1999-2004 1,100 FSU nationals (excludes spouse and children) left the territory, accounting for a third of the total number of beneficiaries from non-EU-27 (OMI 2004). Between 2013 and 2017 5,900 persons (adults and minors) left the territory, thus around 22% of the total (OFII). Russians were the most numerous group, followed by Moldavians, Armenians, Georgians and Ukrainians. While most returnees are male (67% in 2017), women are over-represented among FSU returnees: 54% of Russians, 45% of Moldavians, 52% of Armenians, 40% of Georgians and 47% of Ukrainians (OFII 2017).

3.3 Family

Family is the most frequent admission motive in France: around one third of residence permits are issued on family grounds (Eurostat a). In the period 1998-2017 family migrants also represented one third of admissions among FSU nationals and the most frequent motive among Russians, Eastern Europeans and Caucasians (except for Azerbaijanis) (table 3).

Table 3 First residence permits issued to CEI nationals by nationality and reason, 1998-2017

	1998-2007						
	Number	% col	Admission motives (%)				
			In-ter. prot.	Fa-mily	Educa-tion	Econo-mic	Othe-r
Russia	24458	48,3	22,3	32,2	27,8	8,8	8,9
Eastern Europe	13462	26,6	8,8	43,5	30,3	7,7	9,7
Belarus	2616	5,2	12,8	43,3	29,5	5,9	8,4
Moldova	2920	5,8	11,4	31,4	39,6	8,1	9,5
Ukraine	7926	15,6	6,5	48,0	27,2	8,1	10,2
Caucasus	10558	20,8	40,0	29,4	13,5	3,9	13,2
Armenia	4996	9,9	30,2	40,4	9,1	4,5	15,8
Azerbaijan	1929	3,8	62,1	14,0	16,8	1,8	5,3
Georgia	3633	7,2	41,6	22,4	17,8	4,3	13,8
Central Asia	2191	4,3	22,0	29,3	35,0	6,7	6,9
Kazakhstan	1172	2,3	21,2	29,3	32,8	9,3	7,3
Total	50669	100	22,4	34,5	25,8	7,4	9,9
	2008-2017						
	Number	% col	Admission motives (%)				
			In-ter. prot.	Fa-mily	Educa-tion	Econo-mic	Othe-r
Russia	43867	46,6	27,6	29,6	20,9	9,5	12,3
Eastern Europe	19501	20,7	6,5	47,1	24,8	10,6	11,0
Belarus	2551	2,7	11,2	50,4	20,3	7,3	10,9
Moldova	4331	4,6	2,2	45,6	26,8	12,5	12,9
Ukraine	12619	13,4	7,0	47,0	25,0	10,5	10,4
Caucasus	26299	27,9	26,5	36,7	8,0	3,8	24,9
Armenia	15211	16,1	22,2	42,9	4,3	3,8	26,8
Azerbaijan	3652	3,9	52,7	16,5	14,2	2,9	13,8
Georgia	7436	7,9	22,4	34,1	12,4	4,5	26,6
Central Asia	4521	4,8	14,3	24,5	44,9	6,1	10,1
Kazakhstan	2522	2,7	11,2	19,6	51,9	7,1	10,3
Total	94188	100	22,3	35,0	19,3	8,0	15,5

Source: INED: residence permits of one year or more (1994-2008). Eurostat: residence permits of one year or more (2008-2017).

The family reunification procedure, in which a spouse and/or children join an already established migrant (foreigner), represents relatively few cases among FSU nationals. In the years 2014-2017 only 6% of family permits were issued to spouses of third country nationals (950 out of a total of 16,000) (Eurostat b). One third of family migrants (5,900) were admitted as partners of EU nationals (most often spouses of French) and they represented more than half of family migrants from

Russia, Belarus, Ukraine and Kazakhstan. Persons admitted on other family-related grounds (9,200) were by far the largest group of family migrants: 52% among all FSU nationals and more than 70% of those from Moldova and the Caucasus. The law of 11 May 1998 (art. 5-7°) introduced the admission to stay of persons because of ‘family or personal ties’ (‘non-standard’ family situations not entering in the previous categories such as non-married couples or immigrant families with children enrolled in schools). This procedure often benefits migrants in an irregular situation and as we show in section 4.2, it includes many rejected asylum seekers.

While it is impossible to estimate the total number of child migrants entering France (minors do not receive a residence permit and are not included in the statistics), it is possible to do so for those coming under certain procedures. As we have previously shown many minors from the FSU accompany adult asylum seekers (i.e. their parents). Inversely, family reunification flows from the region are low and only a couple hundred of children (at most) arrive every year in this procedure. A third group of child migrants from the FSU living in France today are international adoptees.⁷ International adoption developed in France in the 1980s and by the start of 2000s 4,000 adoptees on average came to France every year (MAI). Since 2010 their numbers have sharply declined due to a diversity of factors: less giving up of children and rise in domestic adoptions in the countries of origin, as well as greater regulations on national and international levels (Mignot 2015). Russia was one of the main origin countries of international adoptees in France: 3,400 adoptees came to France in the period 2004-2017.

3.4 Education

France is one of the top destinations for international students: in 2016 it ranked 4th place after the United States, the UK and Australia, and alongside Germany and Russia (UNESCO UIS). Although the number of FSU students enrolled in French higher education institutions (HEI) has quadrupled – 2,100 in 1999 and 7,900 in 2016 – it remains a secondary destination. Intra-regional mobility remains high and Russia ranks as 1st or 2nd destination for FSU students, followed by other CIS or neighbouring countries (Czech Republic, Poland, Germany, Turkey). Russia sends the largest number of students abroad (57,300 in 2016) and France was the 5th destination after Germany, Czech Republic, United States and the UK. Armenian students are an exception as France is the 2nd most frequent destination after Russia.

Students accounted for the largest group of migrants among Central Asians: 45% of first resident permits issued in the period 2008-2017 were for study reasons

⁷ International adoptees are not counted as (im-)migrants in France. In the case of a plenary adoption, they are considered French by birth (if at least one of the adoptive parents is French). They receive a special visa to travel from their country of birth to France. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs publishes statistics of these visas.

(table 3).⁸ The increase in student migration has been particularly important in the case of Kazakhstan, where in addition to existing joint degrees and mobility agreements, new bilateral agreements have been signed to promote the mobility of Master and PhD students between the two countries. Among Eastern Europeans students represent the second most frequent reason for admission, whereas for Russians they come in 3rd place after international protection.

Both the number of international students enrolled in HEI (stocks) and 'student' permits (flows) were negatively affected by the 'Guéant' circular of 2011 which made it harder to change to a 'worker' permit after the end of studies (it was repealed the following year). The French government introduced higher fees for students from third countries in 2019⁹ and this change could negatively affect the choices of FSU students in the coming years.

Of the 11,700 FSU students enrolled in French HEI in 2016-2017, three out of four came from only three countries – Russia, Ukraine, Armenia – and were predominantly female (table 4). They were more likely to be enrolled in universities than foreign students in general (79% versus 68%). While most students from the Caucasus were in undergraduate programs (75%), students from Russia, Eastern Europe and Central Asia were more likely to follow Master or PhD programs.

⁸ These statistics only cover residence permits issued for one year or more. The proportion of 'student' permits is actually higher as around one fourth of them are issued for durations between 3 and 12 months.

⁹ Contrary to other major destinations university tuition fees have been the same for national and international students.

Table 4 Students from the FSU enrolled in French HEI, 2016-2017

	Number	% col	Female (%)	Type of HEI (%)				Level of study (university students, %)		
				University	Business Schools	Engineering Schools	Other schools	Licence	Master	Doctorate
Russia	5242	44,9	70,5	75,7	7,9	3,1	13,2	49,7	38,0	12,2
Eastern Europe	3073	26,3	69,8	80,6	4,6	4,2	10,6	47,8	42,3	9,9
Belarus	419	3,6	74,0	81,1	6,7	2,1	10,0	42,9	49,7	7,4
Moldova	825	7,1	69,5	83,4	1,9	5,5	9,2	59,3	35,8	4,9
Ukraine	1829	15,7	69,0	79,3	5,2	4,0	11,4	43,8	43,5	12,7
Caucasus	2614	22,4	61,9	85,0	2,5	0,9	11,6	74,5	22,1	3,4
Armenia	1546	13,2	64,0	87,3	1,7	0,6	10,4	77,6	19,1	3,3
Azerbaijan	437	3,7	50,0	89,0	2,7	1,4	6,9	66,6	29,0	4,4
Georgia	631	5,4	65,0	76,5	4,4	1,4	17,6	72,3	24,6	3,1
Central Asia	749	6,4	69,1	78,6	6,4	2,7	12,3	57,7	34,8	7,5
Kazakhstan	566	4,8	74,5	79,0	6,0	2,8	12,2	58,6	35,1	6,3
Total	11678	100,0	68,3	79,3	5,7	2,9	12,1	55,3	35,4	9,3

Source: Campus France : fiches pays statistiques (2016-2017).

Most students in France are there on a temporary basis. 45% of first ‘student’ residence permit issued in 2010 were not renewed, indicating that their holders most likely returned to their country of origin (DGEF 2017). However, some students do decide to stay in France, either to pursue their studies or for other reasons. 15% of students of the 2010 cohort were still in France five years later with a ‘student’ permit and an additional 20% had changed their status to ‘family’ or ‘work’. Students from Russia followed this trajectory: around one third of students from the cohort 2009 were still in France 5 years later (OECD 2017). In the period 2009-2017, 7,100 ‘students’ from the FSU changed their status to ‘family’ or ‘work’ (Eurostat c).

3.5 Work

After 1974 ‘permanent’ work migration to France was stopped and only ‘temporary’ workers (seasonal workers, posted workers, workers with temporary contracts in specific occupations) were admitted. Recent reforms (2006, 2016) sought to develop certain types of work migration (for example, high-skilled), but have not changed the situation. Despite this, immigrants represent a major component of the work force in France given that many of them enter the labour market ‘indirectly’ as family migrants or refugees, as students changing their status or as regularized workers (OECD 2017).

Work permits represented only 7-8% of residence permits issued to FSU nationals in the period 1998-2017, with slightly higher proportions among Eastern Europeans (table 3). However, as mentioned earlier these statistics do not include ‘temporary’ workers.¹⁰ In this section we use additional statistical data sources in order to include these work migrants into the analysis. In addition to the fact, that they have been numerous in the period, particularly among certain occupations, the ‘temporary’ permits were often renewable and allowed to transition towards a more ‘permanent’ status.

The total number of workers (both permanent and temporary) from the region starts increasing prior to the fall of the Soviet Union and reaches an annual figure of 700 (or more) in the years 2000-2004 (figure 4). It is primarily due to the increase of temporary workers (APT holders): during the years 1994-2004 they represented 68% of FSU workers, well above the average for all non-EU27 nationals (50% in the same period). In the period 2008-2017 the number of workers has been stable and oscillates around 1000 persons a year. Although the data is not entirely

¹⁰ Prior to the 2006 reform temporary workers (work contract of less than one year) did not always receive a residence permit. However, they received a provisional work authorization (APT), statistics on which are available from the Office for International Migrations (OMI). Since the 2006 reform a ‘temporary worker’ permit for contracts of less than one year has been introduced. Although the two sources – statistics on APT (OMI) and residence permits (Eurostat d) – are not entirely comparable, they allow us to describe work migration flows for the period under study, and more particularly flows of researchers and high-skilled migrants.

comparable, it appears that the proportion of temporary workers has decreased: 23% of workers arrived with a permit of less than 12 months in the recent period.

Describing the skill composition of work migrants is not always possible as the relevant information is often unavailable in the data sources. However, it is possible to identify workers entering under specific procedures such as researchers and high-skilled workers. Prior to the creation of a specific ‘researcher’ residence permit in 1999, researchers and university professors entered and worked in France under a variety of statuses, of which a majority with an APT. Figure 4 shows that the increase in the number of workers in the 1990s was largely due to the increasing numbers of researchers. In the period 1994-2004 they represented 160 persons on average – 28% of workers from the FSU – although their actual number may have been higher (for example some could have entered with an ‘employee’ permit). For comparison, among all non-EU27 workers researchers represented 11%.

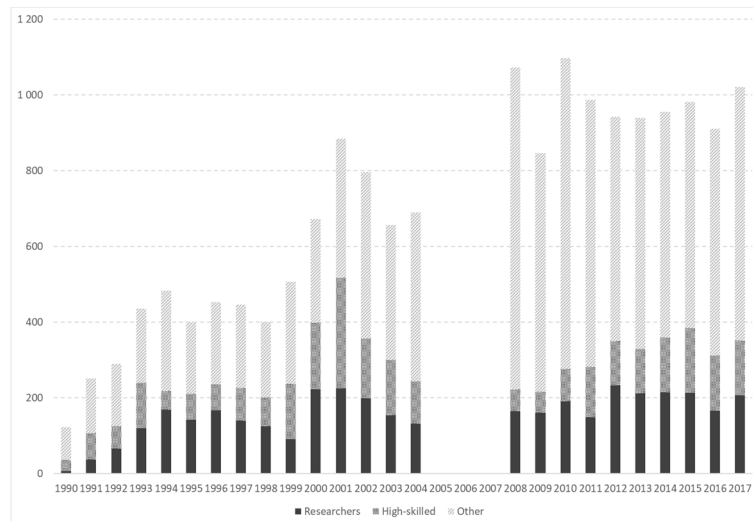


Fig. 4 Number of work residence permits issued to CEI nationals by occupation, 1990-2017

Source: OMI: permanent workers and holders of provisional work authorisation (1990-2004). Eurostat: occupation residence permits [migr_resocc] (2008-2017).

Note: Researchers include persons entering with a provisional work authorisation (1990-2004) and with a ‘researcher’ residence permit (all durations) (2008-2017). High-skilled workers include executives entering as permanent workers and posted workers with a provisional work authorisation (1990-2004) and holders of a ‘employee on a mission’ or a Blue Card (2008-2017). Others include all other employees entering as permanent workers or with a provisional work authorisation (1990-2004) and holders of an ‘employee’ residence permit (2008-2017).

In the recent period, 190 FSU researchers on average are admitted every year in France. Whereas many holders of a ‘researcher’ permit in France are in fact former students changing their status (for example after enrolment in a doctoral program),

FSU nationals are more likely to have this status upon arrival in France, suggesting that these researchers are more advanced in their career (OECD 2017). Most researchers are from Russia (81% in the period 1994-2004), but their origins have diversified with time: 56% of Russians in the period 2008-2017, followed by Ukrainians (18%), Moldovans (8%), Armenians (6%) and Georgians (4%).

High-skilled workers (executives, engineers, ICT transfers) are another important component of work migration from the FSU: they represented 12% of FSU work migrants in 2008-2017. Russians were again the most numerous group (77%), followed by Ukrainians (13%). Recent work flows are more diversified in terms of occupations: researchers and high-skilled workers account for 32% of work migrants compare to 49% in 1994-2004. Other (temporary) workers in France include language assistants¹¹ or young people coming under the Working Holiday Agreement¹². Both groups represented around 50 persons in the recent years (Institut français de Russie; MEAE).

4 Profiles of recent migrants

While some migrants may decide to return or move to other destinations, others settle in France and become members of the immigrant population (sect. 2). Analysing their profiles and circumstances in the first years upon arrival is a prerequisite for understanding their integration process. After a general overview, we focus on two major groups with distinct experiences among our target population: spouses of French and asylum seekers. Analyses in this section are based on two recent surveys among migrants in France: Elipa and Enfams.

4.1 Migratory trajectories from the FSU to France

The Longitudinal Survey on the Integration of Newly Arrived Migrants (Elipa) was conducted among migrants receiving a ‘permanent’ residence permit in 2009, mainly family migrants, refugees and workers.¹³ Firstly, it confirms previous

¹¹ The foreign language assistant programme is open to candidates from one of the 60 partner countries who are native speakers of the language taught in France, of which Russian (CIEP).

¹² The agreement was signed between France and Russia in 2009 (Accord franco-russe du 27 novembre 2009 sur les migrations professionnelles) and implemented in 2011. Participants aged 18-30 years old can work and travel in the other country for a period of up to one year. The annual quota for both countries is 500 persons.

¹³ For more details on the Elipa survey consult Régnard and Domergue (2011). We define our target population as nationals of one of the CIS countries and limit our analysis to adult migrants (having arrived in France at age 18 or older). The survey is representative of 4 400 migrants from the former SU nationals (295 respondents).

findings on the composition of flows from the FSU: majority of female migrants (73%), as well as an important presence of (former) asylum seekers (39%) (table 5). They had higher levels of education than other origins: more than half have a tertiary degree (57% versus 23% of all recent migrants), with the proportion reaching 78% among non-asylum seekers.

Table 5 Characteristics of migrants admitted to permanent stay in France, 2009

Source: Elipa survey, wave 1 (2010), DGEF-DSED. Third country nationals signatories of CAI aged 18 or older at time of arrival in France.

Seeking asylum and joining a spouse were the main reasons of migration for CEI nationals (35% and 39%), although around one out of five had initially come to study or work (table 5). While reasons for migration are generally mixed – 47% of all recent migrants declared two or more reasons – they were less likely to be so for our group, with 71% declaring just one reason of migration. On the other hand, FSU migrants had more complex migratory trajectories: one out of five had previously lived in a country other than their county of birth, in most cases Russia or another neighbouring country. Surprisingly there was no difference by asylum seeker status, suggesting a high level of intra-regional mobility for all inhabitants. The decision to come to Western Europe (France) was sometimes secondary, after a first (failed) attempt of settlement in another country (Kirakosyan 2007). This could further explain why flows to France from the region only took off towards the end of the 1990s and not right after the fall of the Soviet Union.

With other destination countries such as the United States, Israel and Germany already well established, why did some FSU emigrants come to France? Reasons for choosing France depend on their asylum status and differ from those of other groups. Knowing someone in France was by far the most frequently cited factor among all origins (75%), but had a smaller role for migrants from the FSU (52%), especially asylum seekers (28%). Although this may not be surprising given that other factors motivate their departure, the presence of family members determines destination choices of asylum seekers as well (Koser 1997) and 60% of all asylum seekers had personal ties in France before arrival. One out of two asylum seekers from the region declared moving to France because they had no other choice. Other factors such as appeal for French culture and values, the welfare or education system were equally cited by the two groups, but always less often than by persons from other countries, the specific choice of France thus remaining (partly) unresolved.

Historical ties with France or the fact that among these generations some had learned French could partly explain this situation. 22% of FSU nationals had had classes in/of French when still abroad. Although this proportion is significantly lower than among all origins (55%), due to the presence of migrants from African countries where French is the official or the most widely used language, it is still higher than for migrants from Asia (7%), another region where French language does not have this status. Non-asylum seekers from the FSU were more likely to

have learned French than asylum seekers (29% versus 13%). Persons who had been exposed to the French language declared that language was an important factor in their decision to move to France (55%), a similar proportion to the entire sample. They also more often came because of 'personal ties', but also the positive image of France with regards to culture and values, historical ties and the quality of the education system.

The length of stay in France prior to obtaining a permanent residence permit of FSU nationals was on average shorter than for all origins (2.3 versus 3.4 years) (table 5). However, asylum seekers had spent a longer time in France before obtaining a stable legal status (3.5 years), and this was even longer for those who had been rejected (5.2 years) as the asylum application and eventual appeals often last several years. Inversely, most non-asylum seekers are admitted to permanent migrants shortly after their arrival (72% have been living in France for less than 2 years at time of admission).

2/3 of former asylum seekers were granted international protection, whereas one third were rejected from their asylum claims and admitted for other motives, primarily 'personal and family ties' discussed earlier (table 5). Among persons who had not filed an asylum application, spouses of French nationals composed the main admission category (69%).

Migrants from the former SU were older than others upon arrival in France: 32.1 versus 29.5 years. This difference is partly due to the composition of flows and more precisely the higher proportion of refugees, for which migration is often not planned and comes later in life. However even when we compare migrants admitted for the same reasons differences remain. The fact that some of them had previously lived in other countries could also contribute to this result.

4.2 Spouses of French

Marriage migration takes different forms: first- and second-generation migrants forming unions with persons from their countries of origin, unions arising from international mobility due to studies, work or tourism, mail-order brides (Brettell 2017). In France, most studies have focused on the first situation, i.e. couples formed by descendants of North African, Turkish and West African Sahel migrants (Collet and Santelli 2012). More recently, a study looked into gender relations among mixed couples formed by French (male) and Eastern European spouses (female) (Hervouet and Schiff 2017).

Most marriage migrants arrive in France as 'spouses of French'. They represented 41% of recent migrants admitted to stay in 2009 among all origins and 38% among FSU nationals (table 5). This section seeks to compare the process of couple formation and partners' characteristics among these groups. The first important difference concerned the sex composition of this group: 94% spouses of French from the FSU were female (94%), whereas the group was more sex balanced for other

origins (table 6). For comparability purposes, we only consider female spouses in the remainder of this section.

Table 6 Characteristics of of migrants admitted to stay as spouse of French, 2009

	CIS	Northern Africa	Other Africa	Asia	Other	Total
Spouses of French: all respondents						
Female (%)	94,4	51,1	55,9	70,6	63,2	58,1
<i>n obs.</i>	126	1141	532	333	217	2349
Spouses of French: female respondents						
Couple formation						
Met partner abroad	71,9	90,7	85,6	83,4	72,2	85,4
Marriage celebrated abroad	36,5	87,5	81,6	71,8	52,4	76,5
Meeting place of partner						
Family	3,9	34,6	14,7	28,9	2,9	25,2
Public place	16,7	15,6	26,1	15,9	24	18,2
Friends	29,2	9,3	16,9	20,1	31,3	16,1
Vacation	14,7	10,4	10,1	6,7	12,4	10,1
Study or workplace	12,3	5,4	8,4	11,1	15,7	8,4
Family member	0	10,7	5,4	4,3	0	6,8
Internet, ads	18,8	5	5,9	5,8	6,7	6,5
Other	4,5	9,1	12,6	7,3	7	8,7
Partners' characteristics						
Cohabitation prior to marriage	34	6	28	23	35	17
Respondent's age (mean)	33,1	29,3	30,4	30,9	31,5	30,3
Spouse's age (mean)	40,5	37,7	41,9	37,7	36,0	38,5
Male partner is 7 or more years older	52,1	55,5	61,7	43,1	28,2	51,5
Presence of children						
Children living in the household, of which	34,3	25,8	33,7	23,5	31	27,7
- born abroad	22	7,2	16,3	9,3	16	10,9
- born in France	18,3	21,1	19,6	14,9	17,3	19,1
<i>n obs.</i>	119	554	318	226	139	1356

Source: Elipa survey, wave 1 (2010), DGEF-DSED. Third country nationals signatories of CAI and aged 18 or older at time of arrival in France.

Secondly, the place and actors involved in the process of union formation differed. Transnational family networks played an important role among established migrant communities, such as Northern Africans. The meeting of the couple and the celebration of the marriage among this group usually took place in the country of origin (respectively for 91% and 87% of the women) (table 6). 35% of women were presented to their future spouse by family members; for an additional 11% the spouse was a family member. Only a minority had lived together prior to the marriage (6%); thus, their life as a couple started after marriage and migration to France. Although most women from the FSU also met their spouse when still living abroad (72%), a larger proportion celebrated the marriage in France (63%). They were also more numerous to have lived together for a (short) period before getting married

(34%). The largest group had met their future spouse through friends (29%), but one out of five had done so through the Internet (marriage agency, ads), whereas this was a relatively rare phenomenon among other origins.

Thirdly, women from the FSU were on average older than others and more often lived with children born abroad (22%), usually from a previous union. Thus, some of these unions formed blended families, with their specific issues.

4.3 Homelessness among recent arrivals

The housing crisis in France affects a growing number of persons and recent migrants are one of the hardest hit groups (Dietrich-Ragon 2017). Around 140 thousand persons (including both adults and accompanying children) were homeless in mainland France in 2012 (Mordier 2016). Non-EU European nationals (including FSU nationals) represented 11% of the homeless and were the fastest growing group since the previous study in 2001. While most homeless adults were single, migrants from non-French speaking countries were more often in a couple and/or had children living with them.

The limited presence of social networks in France was a risk factor for migrants from the FSU, particularly asylum seekers, becoming homeless (Kirakosyan 2007). Whereas one out of two recent migrants interviewed in Elipa had declared having been homeless since their arrival in France,¹⁴ the type of accommodation they had found differed (table 5). Most migrants were put up by friends or family: 46% had already stayed or were currently staying with other persons. Among FSU nationals only 20% had received help from family or friends and many more had had recourse to institutional accommodations (39% versus 19% among all origins). Whereas non-asylum seekers were less likely to have been in this situation and/or had been able to receive help from family and friends, most asylum seekers (81%) had been homeless and had stayed in institutional accommodations (74%). In some cases, they were not able to have access to this type of accommodation (or had to wait to obtain it) and had been in other situations (makeshift shelter, public spaces) (12%).

The specific difficulties of families of asylum seekers from the FSU in accessing housing are also evident in the Enfams study (2013).¹⁵ Around 17% of homeless families in the greater Paris region were from the CIS, thus the second largest origin

¹⁴ In Elipa persons who have been homeless are identified if they declare having lived in accommodation other than a personal dwelling since their arrival in France.

¹⁵ The Homeless Children and Families survey (ENFAMS) is a cross-sectional survey conducted in the first half of 2013 in the greater Paris region (Vandentorren et al. 2016). Selected families were sheltered in the following types of accommodation: emergency shelter, residential and social reintegration center, social hotel, or reception center for asylum seekers. To participate in the survey they had to include at least one child under the age of thirteen, and speak one of the 17 languages of the study, of which Russian and Armenian. 801 families were interviewed, allowing to estimate the target population at 10,280 families.

after Sub-Saharan Africa (35%) (Guyavarch et al. 2014). Whereas single parent families are over-represented among homeless families, families from the CIS more often comprised a couple (85%) (table 7). They had more often been formed in the country of origin (90% of CIS families had at least one child born abroad), whereas for other origins children had been born in France (78%). Most of these parents were asylum seekers (90%) and still had their application under consideration. Only a minority (10%) had a stable legal status (residence permit or French nationality). In most cases they had entered the public accommodation system directly upon arrival in France (75%); only 12% had previously stayed with other persons beforehand.

Table 7 Characteristics of homeless families in the greater Paris region, 2013

	CIS	Other	Total
Family composition			
Two parents	85,1	35,4	45,8
Single parent	14,9	64,6	54,2
At least one child born abroad	89,9	40,6	50,8
At least one child born in France	40,8	78	70,3
Administrative trajectory			
Length of stay in France (years, mean)	2,6	5,1	4,6
Asylum application	89,5	37,5	48,8
Residence permit or French citizenship	10,8	45,9	38,6
Situation before becoming homeless			
Homeless upon arrival	75,9	20,8	32,3
Living in individual dwelling	4,1	13,9	11,9
Living with family or friends	8,2	59,9	49,1
Other situation	11,7	5,4	6,7
<i>n obs</i>	155	505	660
<i>N (weighted)</i>	1680	6477	8157

Source: Enfams survey (2013), Samusocial de Paris. Homeless families from third countries sheltered in collective accommodations in the greater Paris region.

Thus, while the two groups of families face similar situations at one moment – being homeless and sheltered in a centre – the reasons leading them, their needs during the period they are accommodated, but also the conditions for their eventual leaving the system are different. For CIS families these issues directly revolve around their asylum application, which as we have previously seen can take several years to be decided and is positive only in some cases. At the time of the study, CIS families had been living in France for 2.6 years on average. In other words, this was the time during which both parents and children lacked a stable housing situation with implications for their physical and mental well-being, but also schooling and social and economic integration (Guyavarch et al. 2014).

5 Conclusion

Since the dissolution of the SU and more specifically since the end of the 1990s an increasing number of migrants from the region arrive and settle in France. Although their numbers remain lower than those in other established destinations – United States, Israel, Germany – it has become an important destination for some groups, such as humanitarian migrants. Our analyses point to an extremely heterogeneous group composed of persons seeking asylum, family migrants, students, workers. Although previous waves from the region were also characterized by a diversity of profiles, we also see the appearance of migrant groups characteristic of globalized migration flows, such as marriage migrants or international students. Given this situation, but also the circumstances upon departure from the origin country and arrival in France, it is not possible to speak of one wave of migration from the FSU, but more appropriate to talk of several waves. However, we may distinguish two groups (which sometimes overlap): voluntary migrants coming for a variety of reasons (reuniting with a spouse, studies or work in France) and forced migrants fleeing contexts of violence, instability. Whereas the former is more familiar with France, more often speak French, have higher education levels, the latter present another profile, lower education levels, more rural migrants. The resources for a successful integration are therefore unequal, and this situation is reinforced by the fact that asylum seekers face more unfavourable reception conditions as many flee situation of generalized violence and are thus not recognized as refugees.

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