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Working papers

Migrant entry channels and family-related migratory patterns in Europe:
a theoretical and empirical investigation

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Abstract

Despite the quantitative relevance of family-related migration in most European countries, few studies have attempted to shed light on how migration policies affect family-level migration strategies. The nature of this knowledge gap is both theoretical and empirical. Conceptually, framing the intersections between the macro-level institutional frameworks underpinned by immigration policies, the meso-level functioning of social networks and the micro-level family decision-making is a challenging task. From an empirical perspective, sound analysis of the family and migratory patterns vis-à-vis the institutional frameworks regulating admission, settlement and the right to family reunification is jeopardised by the lack of data sources that keep track of immigration status on entry (and the subsequent status changes), of the family history prior to migration, and of the patterns and timing of household formation in the country of destination.

This paper attempts to address these knowledge gaps. Its overarching aim is to contribute to a better understanding of how admission channels shape household composition and the patterns and timing of family migratory processes. The paper begins with a conceptual review and synthesis of the links between immigration policies, migratory processes and household decision-making strategies. The following empirical analysis is based on the 2008 Ad-Hoc Module on migrant workers of the EU Labour Force Survey for eleven EU receiving countries (Austria, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and United Kingdom). A set of indicators is used to describe the migrant household composition and timing of families' migratory pattern.

Results reveal distinctive family-related migration patterns and migrant household composition by route of entry, suggesting that selective admission policies define the composition of the migrant families at different stages of the migratory experience, disrupting the cohabitation of spouses and, even more often, of different generations. One major feature of the association is its strong gendered connotation.

Abstract

Nonostante la rilevanza numerica delle migrazioni su base familiare in molti paesi Europei, solo pochi studi hanno cercato di evidenziare come le politiche migratorie influiscono sulle strategie di mobilità, sui processi di formazione e sulle scelte riproduttive delle famiglie migranti. Questo gap è dovuto sia a motivi teorici sia empirici. Le difficoltà concettuali emergono nel momento in cui si tenta di inquadrare le intersezioni tra il livello istituzionale in cui si pongono le politiche migratorie, l'influenza dei network sociali e famigliari, e le decisioni prese da coppie e individui. Dal punto di vista empirico, la scarsità di fonti di dati su larga scala contenenti informazioni quali lo status del migrante al momento dell'ingresso del paese d'arrivo (e i successivi cambiamenti di status), la storia famigliare precedente la migrazione e i percorsi e le tempistiche della formazione del nucleo famigliare nel paese di destinazione, limitano fortemente le possibilità di analizzare i percorsi migratori e le relazioni con il quadro istituzionale che regola l'ammissione, l'insediamento e il diritto alla riunificazione famigliare.

L'obiettivo di questo lavoro è quello di contribuire a ridurre questi gap conoscitivi favorendo una migliore comprensione del ruolo e del tipo di influenza dei canali di ammissione sulla composizione e sui percorsi di formazione del nucleo famigliare. La prima parte del Working Paper fornisce una rassegna teorica e un tentativo di sintesi concettuale dei complessi legami tra politiche migratorie, processi di mobilità e strategie decisionali a livello famigliare. La successiva analisi empirica è basata sull'Indagine Europea sulla Forza Lavoro e in particolare sul modulo Ad-Hoc realizzato nel 2008 avente come focus i lavoratori immigrati. I dati utilizzati sono relativi ad undici paesi europei di destinazione (Austria, Francia, Germania, Grecia, Irlanda, Italia, Olanda, Portogallo, Spagna e Regno Unito). Un insieme di indicatori è utilizzato al fine di comparare la composizione dei nuclei famigliari e i tempi dei percorsi migratori per le diverse categorie di ingresso.

I risultati mostrano che la composizione e i percorsi di formazione dei nuclei famigliari differiscono sensibilmente in base al canale di accesso nel paese di destinazione, suggerendo che meccanismi di selezione all'ingresso e di limitazione delle possibilità di insediamento e di ricongiungimento definiscono la composizione delle famiglie migranti nelle diverse fasi dell'esperienza migratoria – in molti casi interrompendo la convivenza dei membri del nucleo. Un aspetto caratterizzante dell'associazione riscontrata è la sua decisa connotazione di genere.

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1. Introduction

Despite the quantitative relevance of family-related migration in most European countries, the family patterns and social dimension of migration are still marginal in much of the recent literature which often mischaracterizes migration as the behavior of an individual instead of being a family process (Kofman et al. 2011). In particular, few studies have attempted to shed light on how migration policies affect family-level migration strategies – for example, whether immigration regulations encourage the migration of single individuals or entire households, whether the family migrates jointly or selects one member who migrates first, and, in the latter case, whether and when family reunification takes place.

Yet immigration regulations define the composition of the family and restrict its flexibility, frequently reinforce gender inequalities and truncate the cohabitation of generations. Entry regulations laid down by the state construct family membership, its role and functions (Strasser et al 2009). The prominent role of family- and household-level decision-making and family networks in understanding the macro-level dynamics of mobility and their implications for migration policies has been emphasized in the North American migration scholarship. For example, a strand of literature focused on the potential multiplier effect triggered by admissions on the basis of family ties (Borjas and Bronars 1991, Hasso and Rosenzweig 1986, Jasso and Rosenzweig 1989, Yu 2008). The centrality of family networks in migration decision-making has also been emphasized in studies looking at the relationships between changes in the admission systems and incentives for irregular migration (e.g. Massey et al. 2003). It has been argued that the prolonged family separation associated with the tightening of border controls and the increased duration of undocumented stays brought about a change in the composition of undocumented Mexican migrants with a decreasing proportion of solo men and a growing quota of families (Cornelius et al. 2008). With few exceptions (e.g. González-Ferrer 2011), quantitative studies focusing on these links are largely absent from the European literature (OECD 2013).

The nature of this knowledge gap is both theoretical and empirical. Conceptually, framing the intersections between the macro-level institutional frameworks underpinned by immigration policies, the meso-level functioning of social networks and the micro-level family decision-making is a challenging task. From a migrant perspective «policies become opportunity structures to be compared and negotiated» (Castles, 2004: 209). Unpacking the interactions between migration as an economic and social process and the selection mechanisms (based on attributes such as nationality, age, education, language knowledge and income) deployed by governments to regulate admissions is also crucial because different actors contribute to shape migratory processes. Recent research emphasized that migrants respond to regulatory changes by developing strategies to 'navigate' the system (e.g. Anderson 2010), and so do employers and recruiters (e.g. Cangiano and Walsh 2014). From an empirical perspective, sound analysis of the family and migratory patterns vis-à-vis the institutional frameworks regulating admission, settlement and the right to family reunification is jeopardised by the lack of data sources that keep track of immigration status on

entry (and the subsequent status changes), of the family history prior to migration, and of the patterns and timing of household formation in the country of destination.

This paper attempts to address these knowledge gaps. Its overarching aim is to contribute to a better understanding of how admission channels shape household composition and the patterns and timing of family migratory processes. We begin with a conceptual review and synthesis of the links between immigration policies, migratory processes and household decision-making strategies. Our empirical analysis is based on the 2008 Ad-Hoc Module on migrant workers of the EU Labour Force Survey which included a bespoke set of questions on the reasons for migration, date of acquisition of citizenship, duration of work/residence permit and restrictions attached to immigration status. The cross-classification of these variables offers the unprecedented opportunity to identify, under reasonable assumptions, immigration status on arrival. We carry out most our analysis based on a pooled sample of eleven EU receiving countries (Austria, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and United Kingdom). A set of indicators is used to describe the migrant household composition and timing of families' migratory pattern. Sample size permitting, a cross-country comparison is also developed to explore possible differences ascribable to the features of national migration regimes. Our results reveal distinctive family-related migration patterns and migrant household composition by route of entry, suggesting that selective admission policies define the composition of the migrant families at different stages of the migratory experience, disrupting the cohabitation of spouses and, even more often, of different generations. One major feature of this association is its gendered connotation.

2. Migrant households as decision-making units: conceptual underpinnings

Migration research has widely recognized the key role of the family as decision-making unit in migration decisions (Cook, 2008; Stark 1991). According to Rumbaut "The family is perhaps the strategic research site for understanding the dynamics of immigration flows (legal and illegal) and of immigrant adaptation processes as well as long-term consequences for sending and especially for receiving countries" (Rumbaut 1997, p. 6). Pioneering studies looking at the determinants of internal migration movements (e.g. DaVanzo 1976) built on human capital theory and conceptualized migration decision-making of individual members or the entire family as a strategy to maximize economic benefits for all members given the resources available and the alternative (monetary and nonmonetary) income-generating strategies. While still accepting the economic rationale to family migration decision-making, subsequent sociological studies challenged the gender neutrality of the human capital model, with empirical results consistently showing that migration decisions are more responsive to economic/career motivation of the husband and the wife taking a subsidiary role (e.g. Bielby and Bielby 1992). More refined approaches further unpacked the links between migration decisions and life course events, pointing to the temporal interdependencies between mobility, employment, transition to adulthood and family formation processes (e.g. De Jong and Graefe

2008). Two major contributions of the international migration scholarship helped conceptualize the role of the family as a linking agent between social and economic structures and individual decision making. The new economics of labour migration extended the economic rationale of human capital approaches to family migration decision by providing deeper understanding of decision-making processes determining the choices to migrate or stay of each household member (e.g. who is the family member who migrates first) and by including risk-diversification strategies that entail the migration of family members to diverse labour markets, from which they remit part of their earnings to the family at home (Stark and Bloom 1985; Stark 1991; Taylor 1999). According to this theory the composition of the household is a key factor in the migratory plan because it determines not only the pool of possible candidates but also the income generating capacity of those who are left behind. Social network theory conceptualized household and family units as multifunctional entities that determine the economic incentives to migrate, convey cultural norms and expectations regarding the qualifying characteristics of who is a migrant, create kinship networks that provide information and practical assistance to potential new migrants, and are subject to commitment and obligations to household in the sending community (Boyd 1989: 642-3). Family ties work both as pull and push factor. Each family member who migrates reduces the costs of migration for other family members because he or she can provide information, housing, and other opportunities otherwise unavailable to the potential migrant (Landale 1997). At the same time, family ties may be crucial in the formation of migrant networks than bring about the cumulative causation pushing towards further migrations following the path already traced by other family members (Massey 1990). The family and its everyday and transnational practices serve as a crucial dimension in migratory circulation and integration (Kraler et al 2011: 16; Bailey and Boyle 2004; Herman 2006), also amongst skilled migrants. Within this framework, it has been underlined that the role of family networks tends to be more important for women than for men in both shaping their migration decision and their post-migration behaviour (Curran and Rivero 2003). This highlights that the women's role in society and the relation between genders may influence the family migration's strategy and suggests to focus on both men's and women's experiences adopting a gender perspective.

However, international migration research has rarely provided sound empirical testing of the key assumptions underpinning these conceptual frameworks – an obvious reason for this gap being the lack of quantitative data linking the migration trajectories of household members in origin and destination countries. Most relevant to this paper, only few studies have attempted to shed light on how immigration policies affect family-level migration strategies in the European context. This is more thoroughly discussed in the next section.

3. Migration policies and the family

Generally speaking, migration policies inform, guide and constrain migration decision-making of individuals and families in various ways. First, by establishing the number and/or the personal and professional attributes of migrants admitted to the country, immigrant selection criteria represent the institutional constraints within which potential migrants make their decisions on whether or not to migrate and how (e.g. permanently or temporarily, regularly or irregularly, with or without the family). The selection of admitted migrants on the basis of human capital or skills (e.g. educational titles and knowledge of host country language) is explicit in points-based systems (e.g. in the UK) but is also implicit in labour migration schemes to recruit lesser skilled workers (e.g. quota systems for specific jobs or economic sectors) or when preference in filling job vacancies is accorded on the basis of nationality (e.g. the preferential treatment of EU workers within the EU labour market, or when bilateral agreements are in place with some countries of origin). Although selection mechanisms are mainly operational in labour admission policies, they are increasingly built into rights-based immigration avenues, e.g. through compulsory pre-entry language test for family migrants.

Migration policies also influence the migrant experience in the host country and prospects for stay or return by regulating (and restricting) leave to remain, access to employment and naturalization and the possibility to bring in family members of the different categories of migrants who are admitted to the country. While highly skilled labour migration routes (e.g. points-based systems) do not normally carry significant initial restrictions and lead to a relatively smooth transition to full citizenship rights (Ruhs 2011), temporary labour migration schemes used to admit lesser skilled workers impose restrictions in the access to the labour market (e.g. legal constraints in switching to another job or employer) and provide limited (if any) opportunity to acquire permanent residence status. Similarly, international students are also subject to sharp constraints in the renewal of their visas and granted only limited periods of time after the completion of their studies to find a job offer entitling them to stay on. Other examples of policies regulating status changes include regularization procedures (allowing previously undocumented migrants to take up legal residency and employment) and, at the other end of the migrant 'legal journey', citizenship laws. Research has also emphasized that the precariousness of residence rights might also be due to cumbersome practices in the application of immigration policies – for example in the case of asylum seekers whose applications remain pending for years – with disruptive effects on migrant lives (Bloch 2007). Finally, as a catalyst rather than as a barrier for integration, measures typically targeted at supporting dependants and humanitarian migrants – e.g. language and vocational training courses – might also contribute to shape migrant prospects of socio-economic inclusion, thereby affecting the migratory projects and decisions about settlement, re-migration or return.

From a family perspective, various aspects are likely to make an impact. First, immigrant selection criteria imply that choices regarding whether the family migrates jointly or initially sends off one member, and, if the latter, who is the individual who migrates first, are not unconstrained. On the contrary, because visas

are non-tradable, it can be assumed that the selection of the family member who best satisfies the restrictions imposed by immigration regulations is one of the variables in the equation that informs the cost-benefit assessment of household-level decisions. Based on this assumption, if the family's nominated best 'candidate' does not possess the personal and professional attributes of the immigrant profile exogenously imposed by immigration regulations, migration costs will increase as the family will have to find ways to circumvent admission policies (Borjas and Bronars 1991; Castles 2004). Gender implications of labour migration policies might also come into play because the gender segmentation of labour demand might imply that working visas are predominantly granted for male or female dominated occupations (e.g. based on shortage occupation lists).

How family networks operate also depend upon the provisions and restrictions of immigration policies which establish who is entitled to sponsor family reunion applications, who is allowed to enter the country, and the conditions under which family members are admitted. International human rights frameworks and the establishment of a right to family reunification in EU law (Directive 2003/86/EC) constrain the power of EU countries to restrict family-related migration in the same way as labour and other discretionary flows (for example by capping the number of admissions). However, states have adopted several measures to indirectly regulate and restrict opportunities for family related migration (Kraler 2010).

The criteria that define which family members are allowed to migrate (and at what stage of the migration chain) vary to some extent by country of destination but overall tend to establish eligibility on the basis of marriage and the nuclear family unit (i.e. spouses and dependent children). Parents are generally entitled to family reunification only if older than 65 and financially dependent of the sponsor. Unmarried partners are often denied the right to family reunification, and so are adult offspring and siblings (EMN 2008). This definition of family as nuclear unit may not fully reflect the kinship links on which household decision-making is based in societies with extended family structures (Boyd 1989). While the implications of such mismatch are not easy to gauge, evidence suggests that family networks are also a core feature of undocumented migration[1]. The immigration status of the sponsor is also used as a selection criterion. While EU nationals, naturalized citizens, permanent residents, long-term work permit holders and refugees are typically entitled to bring in their family members, restrictions often apply to migrants holding other types of visa – e.g. seasonal/temporary workers and students. A minimum number of years of residence may also be required before sponsoring marriage migrants and spousal reunification. The possibility for the sponsor and the family to migrate simultaneously is also granted only in some countries (e.g. UK and Germany) or a prerogative of some immigrant categories such as highly skilled professionals (EMN 2008).

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[1] For example, Italian regularization data showed that many applicants for regularization had close relatives sponsoring their applications (Carfagna et al. 2008).

Since the beginning of the 1990s policy changes have been introduced to family reunification laws to make them more selective and to prevent alleged abuses of the system. A requirement that migrants sponsoring family reunifications possess the financial means to provide for their family members (including appropriate housing) was introduced, and has subsequently been tightened, in many EU countries (OECD 2011). This requirement has been shown to be gender-biased because the overrepresentation of women in low-pay occupations implies that female migrant workers are less likely to be eligible to sponsor the arrival of family members (Kraler 2010)[2]. Many countries have taken action to restrict allegedly 'bogus' marriages. For example, an obligation to co-habit for a period of 2 to 4 years exist in most EU countries, with separation and divorce leading to the termination of spouses' right to stay (OECD 2000). More recently, a number of Western European countries such as the Netherlands, Germany and France have made family reunifications conditional on passing pre- or post-arrival "integration tests" to demonstrate sufficient knowledge of the language, culture and value of the receiving society (OECD 2011).

Immigration and integration policies also intersect with family migration decisions and the operation and temporal development of networks by restricting (or encouraging) settlement. As outlined above, immigration status on entry is related to the length of stay and the temporariness or permanency of the migratory project, as is the eligibility to sponsor family reunification. Integration policies are also targeted at specific categories, namely family migrants and recognized refugees. Citizenship policies are also likely to play a role because migrants may become eligible to bring in their families only after naturalization. Indeed, research has identified empirical regularities in the links between family reunification, naturalization trends and changes in citizenship laws (Jasso and Rosenzweig 1986). The acquisition of an EU citizenship may also represent a desired outcome of the family migratory project, particularly for migrant children.

An important caveat in framing the intersections between migration policies and family-related migration is the distinction between channels of entry, motives for migration and the actual family relationships of the new arrivals. Immigration policies categorise migrants on the basis of their stated reason for migrating. While it can be assumed that, in countries where most immigration is documented, for the majority of migrants the primary reason for moving corresponds to the visa category held on arrival, this assumption may prove over simplistic in a large number of cases. First, because it relies on the notion that migrants move for one single reason, rather than for a combination of reasons and in a variety of circumstances. Second, because migrants may apply for certain types of visa depending on the expectation they have of entering the country (Anderson, 2010)[3]. Third, because family and social networks operate as powerful agencies allowing migrants to circumvent the system. For example, Gonzàlez-Ferrer (2012) argues that in

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[2] In more general terms, Boyd (1989: 659) argued that «the presumption of males as breadwinners and females as dependent spouses can be built explicitly into immigration policy», thereby shaping the operation of family networks.
[3] In Anderson's words (2010: 308), «immigration controls are not a neutral framework facilitating the sorting of individuals by intentions and identities into particular categories, rather they *produce status*».

Spain spouse reunification on the fringes of the law has been more frequent than legal family reunification, while Beauchemin et al. (2014) show that restrictive admission policies in European destinations have not deterred couple reunion amongst Sub-Saharan migrants.

In sum, the growing body of literature placing family dynamics at the core of migration strategies demonstrated how the conditions imposed by the state to regulate migrants' entry and stay contribute to shape membership and functions in the migrant family (Strasser et al. 2009), often reinforcing gender roles and inequalities. A key outcome of selective admission policies is that they define the composition of the migrant families at different stages of the migratory experience, disrupting the cohabitation of spouses and, even more often, of different generations. Migrant families, in turn, adopt responsive strategies to realise their migratory plans. In Borjas and Bronar's words «immigration policies magnify the family's role» (1991: 124).

4. Empirical methodology

Empirical analyses included in this paper are based on statistical exploitation of the EU-LFS AHM 2008[4]. Despite some well-known limitations in quality and coverage[5], the LFS is commonly used across the EU to produce data on migrant workers in employment and includes sample sizes for the migrant workforce large enough to conduct disaggregated analyses in most EU-15 countries (Eurostat 2010). In our analysis we consider eleven countries (Austria, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and United Kingdom). Four countries (Belgium, Denmark, Finland Sweden) are excluded due to partial or total lack of data[6].

The first step of our methodology was the construction of immigration categories approximating immigration status on arrival. Our target group was the foreign born population aged 15 to 64 (at the time of the interview) who last migrated to the destination country in the 10 years preceding the survey (1998-2008) and were at least 15 years old at the time of migration[7]. Due to the lack of specific data on the type of permit/visa (or lack of) held by migrants when they entered the country, immigration categories were

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[4] A more comprehensive account of the method used in the construction of the immigration categories can be found in Cangiano (2012).

[5] Estimates of the migrant population and workforce provided by the LFS are likely to be conservative, although their level of inaccuracy is hard to predict. In particular, recent arrivals are likely to be undercounted and irregular migrants are likely to escape the survey. For a detailed account of the limitations of the LFS in producing migration data see Martí and Ródenas (2007).

[6] The Belgian dataset does not contain the year of arrival, for Denmark there is no the reason of entry, the Swedish dataset contains only one member for each dataset and there are no household variables for the matching of the couples, for Finland data were not released.

[7] In some EU countries the Labour Force Survey does not include children in the sample. The Ad-Hoc module questions were only asked of individuals older than 15 at the time of last migration.

derived by combining information provided by the core LFS module on country of birth, nationality and year of arrival, with AHM 2008 variables on the country of birth of parents, main reason for (last) migration and the year of acquisition of citizenship. Ten immigration categories were defined: 1) EU-15 / EFTA[8] migrants (including people born in another EU-15/EFTA country); 2) Post-enlargement EU-12 migrants[9]; 3) labour migrants with a job found before migrating (including intra-company transfers); 4) labour migrants with no job found before migrating; 5) migrant students; 6) asylum seekers; 7) family reunification migrants; 8) marriage or family formation; 9) ancestry-based admissions[10]; and 10) other non-EEA migrants[11]. Essentially, categories 1), 2) and 9) were obtained by cross-classifying information on country of birth, parents' country of birth, nationality at birth and age at last migration. For non-EEA adult migrants immigration categories (3 to 8 and 10) were allocated by assuming that the reported reason for migration[12] was a proxy for the type of entry visa. For Germany, a bespoke procedure (based on the correspondence between year of entry and year of acquisition of citizenship for migrants coming from Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union) was used to capture ethnic Germans (*Spätaussiedler*) – see Cangiano (2012) for further details.

Some limitations in the effectiveness of these immigration categories in capturing immigration status on entry of non-EEA nationals are evident. Employment-related categories are defined in generic terms with no explicit reference to country-specific visas for the admission of labour migrants. Importantly in countries highly affected by irregular migration such as Italy and Spain[13], it is not possible to identify those who entered the country without a residence authorization (including both irregular migrants and those overstaying tourist or visitor visas). More in general, the assumption that the stated motivation for migration corresponds to the actual type of permit/visa held by the migrant on arrival is a strong one, with implications for the definition of immigration categories that are hard to gauge. Post-enlargement intra-EU migration is likely to be underestimated due to poor coverage of recent arrivals. It is also possible that ethnic Germans were somewhat underestimated because our procedure does not capture those who

[8] Nationals of the countries of the European Free trade Association (Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland) enjoy unrestricted labour mobility in the European Union.

[9] For the sake of simplicity, different transitional arrangements for the mobility of new citizens adopted by former member states were not considered. Also, it was not possible to differentiate between EU-10 and EU2 accessions as post 2007 migrants are not captured in the dataset.

[10] This category includes adult migrants born abroad but citizens of the country of destination from birth; and migrants whose father and/or mother were born in the country of destination. Adjustments based on Census and administrative data were made for France and Sweden whose LFS 2008 dataset only included individuals aged 15 and over.

[11] Residual category of all the remaining migrants born outside the EU who migrated as adults.

[12] Coded in the original dataset as variable *MIGREAS.*

[13] Regularization data for Italy and Spain suggest that in these countries very significant proportions of regular migrants acquired a residence permit (mostly for employment purposes) when they were already living and working irregularly (e.g. Cangiano and Strozza 2008).

retained the foreign nationality for some years after entering Germany and those whose parents were already German nationals. While all these caveats have to be borne in mind in the interpretation of the results, they are unlikely to determine a substantial misrepresentation of the broader trends captured by our estimates. As shown elsewhere (Cangiano 2012), these are for the most part consistent with other data sources – such as the OECD estimated composition of the immigrant flows by category of entry (OECD, various years; Lemaitre et al. 2007) – and with prior expectations based on differences in the national admission systems reviewed in the previous section.

The other component of our methodology consisted in the estimation of a set of indicators describing the composition of migrant households and the patterns of family-related mobility and household formation in the country of destination. This is achieved by matching the characteristics of the two partners and their cohabiting children, if any, for each household. In this way we can analyse the links between family-level migration decisions and the immigration channels used by both partners to enter the country of destination.

Our analysis focus on two main dimensions: the household composition and the timing of families' migratory patterns (see, respectively section 5.1 and 5.2). For the former dimension we consider the following indicators: 1) being single or living with a partner; 2) being married but without a partner in the household and 3) having a native-born partner (mixed couples). The latter dimension takes into account: 4) being in partnership with, and arrived before, a spouse visa holder; 5) being arrived simultaneously, i.e. in the same year as the partner; and 6) having native-born children.

For each indicator we evaluate the proportion of cases according to the immigration status on entry and sex for the pooled sample, i.e. all countries considered together. In section 5.4 we also analyse cross-country differentials, even though limitation in the sample size force us to limit the analysis to selected countries and indicators.

5. Results

5.1 The migrant population by immigration category on entry

Our estimates reveal a very heterogeneous composition of the migrant workforce by category of entry across EU receiving countries (table 1) that reflects the significant variation in terms of openness to labour migration and orientation of national migration regimes. Labour migrants account for only 1 in 10 or less of recent arrivals in the 'old' immigration countries of continental Europe (France, Germany, the Netherlands, Austria) that, after concluding their experience of large scale labour recruitment in the early 1970s, consolidated a restrictive and selective approach in the admissions of non-EEA nationals via labour-related channels. Recent immigration in these countries is primarily characterised by the prominence of intra-EU-15 mobility (about 1 in 5 of new immigrants) and of marriage migration (accounting for 14% of

inflows in France and Germany and a remarkable 29% in the Netherlands, the only EU country where marriage migration is more common than family reunification). Austria and the Netherlands are also the two countries with the largest shares of asylum seekers (more than 1 in 10), while Germany stands out for the largest share of ancestry-based migrants (18%), reflecting the still large (although decreasing) number of arrivals of Ethnic Germans from the former Soviet Union in the late 1990s and early 2000s. In the other EU countries labour migration played a much more significant role. In the UK, which took an explicitly open stance towards labour migration in the years of the Blair's administration, significant numbers of skilled workers were admitted via a work permit system (the predecessor of the current 5-tier Points-based system). The greater openness of the UK to labour mobility was then confirmed by the decision not to restrict employment of A8 nationals upon the 2004 EU Enlargement, making the country a major destination for labour-related post-2005 enlargement migration from the new member states – which however accounted for a much larger share (42%) of total inflows in Ireland. The UK has also been the major EU receiving country for international student migration (15% of total admissions, same as France and twice as large as the EU average). Non-EEA labour migration has been a major feature of the migratory landscape in Southern Europe, making up half or more of recent inflows in Greece, Italy, Spain and Portugal. Despite formally restrictive labour admission avenues, these countries progressively developed a de-facto open policy approach to labour migration by regularising the status of large numbers of irregular migrants (Finotelli 2012; Salis 2012). Arguably, most recent migrants who entered these countries with no residence authorisation or overstaying a temporary visa are captured by the category 'employment without a job'. However, estimates for Southern European destinations are likely to understate the presence of post-enlargement EU-12 migrants – Romanians are currently the largest immigrant group in Italy and Spain. This is probably due to a poor coverage of recent arrivals in the Labour Force Survey – see footnote 5.

Table 1 – Composition of the migrant population by immigration status on entry and country of destination, recent and long-established migrants. Entry between 1998 and 2008 (%).15-64 years at the interview and migrated after 15 years of age

	EU-15	Post-enl	Job (before mig)	Job (no job before mig)	Study	Asylum seeker	Reunif	Marriage	Ancestry	Other adult	TOT	n
AT	22.6	8.1	3.4	9.2	6.9	11.3	23.6	7.9	4.0	3.0	100.0	848
DE	13.1	8.5	4.1	2.5	10.1	7.6	14.6	13.9	18.4	7.3	100.0	800
ES	5.4	7.5	8.6	42.1	2.5	0.2	23.1	3.3	2.6	4.7	100.0	3,294
FR	18.4	3.3	3.0	8.5	15.4	4.0	20.1	13.5	8.1	5.9	100.0	1,055
GR	2.5	9.2	4.2	54.1	0.6	3.9	16.6	2.3	4.8	1.8	100.0	1,646
IE	17.8	42.4	7.8	7.5	5.8	2.3	6.8	0.8	5.8	3.1	100.0	4,584
IT	2.0	7.3	12.2	41.4	2.0	0.2	25.0	5.5	2.5	1.9	100.0	2,734
LU	74.8	5.1	2.6	1.3	1.1	2.3	4.6	5.1	0.9	2.3	100.0	954
NL	17.3	3.3	4.0	2.1	4.3	11.6	9.6	28.7	13.1	6.0	100.0	1,609
PT	2.2	2.9	9.3	38.7	3.9	0.3	23.6	3.2	10.7	5.2	100.0	618
UK	11.1	19.4	8.9	7.2	14.5	6.2	15.5	5.9	4.7	6.7	100.0	3,709
Total	9.8	10.8	7.6	22.7	7.5	3.7	19.1	7.3	6.5	5.1	100.0	
n	3142	3622	1552	4249	1170	768	3505	1505	1444	894		21,851

Source: Own estimates based on the EU-LFS, 2008 Ad-hoc module.

As table 1 only refers to adult migrants, the breakdown shown does not capture the full extent of family-related migration. When migrant children are taken into account, total non-EEA family-related admissions (i.e. reunifying spouses, marriage migrants and child dependants) contributed to between one third and one half of the stock of recent arrivals in most EU countries[14]. It is also worthwhile noting that some immigration categories are markedly gender-unbalanced: typically, 60% of recent labour migrants and asylum seekers are men while 70% or more of spouse visa holders are women (breakdowns for immigrant couples are shown below).
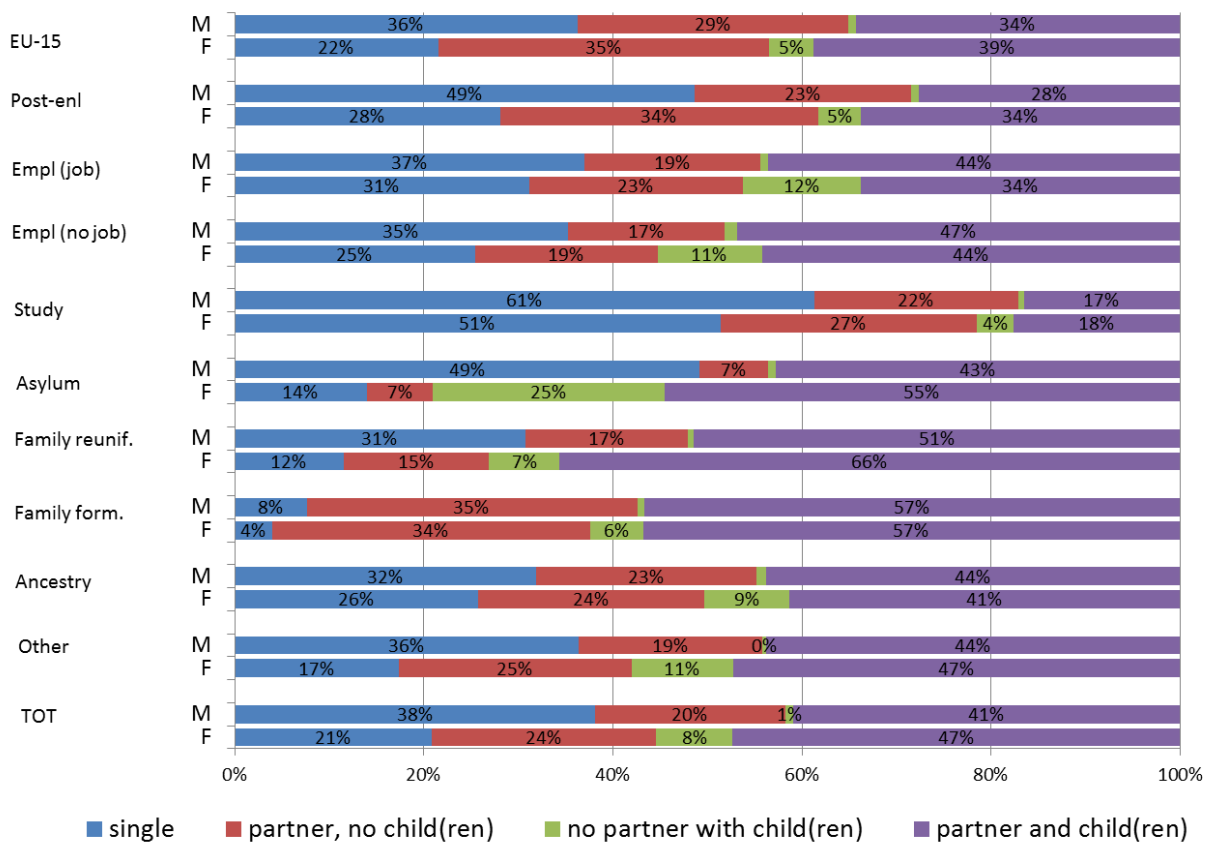
5.2 Household composition

In this section we explore the links between household composition and the immigration channels used by both partners to enter the country of destination. Figure 1 represents the distribution by type of household categorised on the basis of two dimensions: having or not a partner and having or not children. Results are presented for the 11 EU countries combined. Separate estimates by sex highlight significant gender differences in the household composition. A much larger proportion of one-person households is found amongst migrant men (38%) than amongst migrant women (21%). This feature is particularly

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[14] The only exceptions were Luxembourg (1 in 5) and Ireland (1 in 10).

prominent within some immigration categories, i.e. asylum seekers, post-enlargement migrants and family reunifications[15]. In turn, about 1 in 10 migrant women – and a remarkable 25% amongst female asylum seekers – are single mothers with children, a situation which is virtually absent amongst migrant men. Other differences in the household composition across categories include the larger proportion of couples with children amongst so-called settlement categories (marriage migration, family reunification and asylum); a higher propensity to be in child-less partnerships amongst EU and marriage migrants; and, rather unsurprisingly, the high proportion (more than 50%) of singles amongst both male and female international students.

Figure 1 – Type of household composition by immigration status on entry (Y-axis) and sex (%).

Source: Own estimates based on the EU-LFS

Further insights on the links between mobility and the disruption of couples' cohabitation can be drawn from the intersection of the household composition and marital status at the time of the interview –

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[15] The high proportion of single households amongst male asylum seekers is likely to reflect couples' deferred migratory patterns resulting in family disruption. It is more difficult to interpret why a high proportion (31%) of men entering via family reunification channels are found in single person households. This might be related to post-migration union breakdown, but also to cases where the person applying for family reunification is not the spouse.

unfortunately the EU-LFS does not record marital status at the time of migration. In particular, figure 2 shows the percentage of married migrants who live in a household without their partner at the interview, revealing significant differences across immigration categories and, within some categories, strong gender gaps. The propensity of male married migrants to migrate without their partner is highest (i.e. more than 15% of cases) amongst post-enlargement EU-12 migrants, labour migrants and students. Female married migrants who move for employment reasons are also more likely than other categories to leave their husbands behind, but this is not the case amongst female married students, only 4% of whom are found in a household without their partner. Interestingly, the share of married migrant women without a partner is higher than the average also amongst female asylum seekers, a result that indicate family disruption as a possible outcome of forced migration.

Figure 2 – Proportion of migrants married but without the partner in the household by immigration status on entry. 2008 (%).
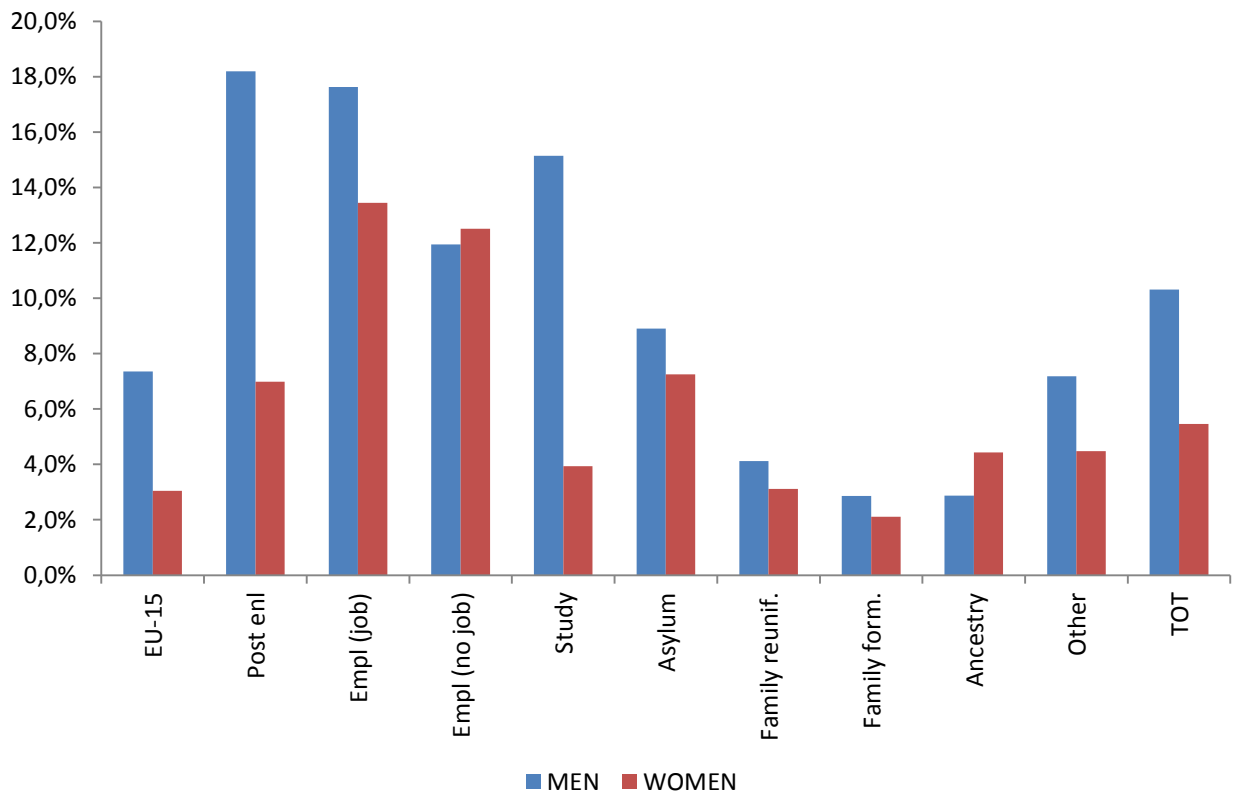

Source: Own estimates based on the EU-LFS

Another feature of the family-migration nexus is the extent to which migrants form mixed couples with native partners. It can be assumed that in most cases these partnerships are formed in the country of destination and involve foreign-born individuals who are single at the time of migration, but this can't be

verified in our data that do not provide information on the timing of union formation. Once again results vary significantly by sex and category of entry (figure 3). For both non-EEA migrant men and women marriage migration involves in the majority of cases the formation of unions with native born partners, rather than with other migrants. This is an interesting result suggesting that most marriage migration is not 'generated' by previous immigration flows (although some native born partners could belong to the second generations). The other categories with high probability to be in unions with native born partners are ancestry-based migrants, EU-15 nationals and non-EEA (especially female) students, a result that might be related to the cultural proximity and/or better social integration outcomes of these groups. This also suggests that a significant proportion of those who stay on after study might do so because they form a union with a native partner and, possibly, acquire full residency rights on that ground[16]. The largest gender gap in the probability to form partnerships with native-born individuals is observed amongst labour migrants, with only 6% of non-EEA male workers compared to 21% of female workers. In contrast, a higher percentage of men who entered as spouses live with a native born partner. The low proportion of asylum seekers in mixed couples is probably related to well-known barriers to social inclusion as well as to the high share of simultaneous migration of couples jointly applying for asylum (see below).

Figure 3 – Proportion of migrants with a native-born partner among migrants in couples by sex and immigration status on entry. 2008 (%).


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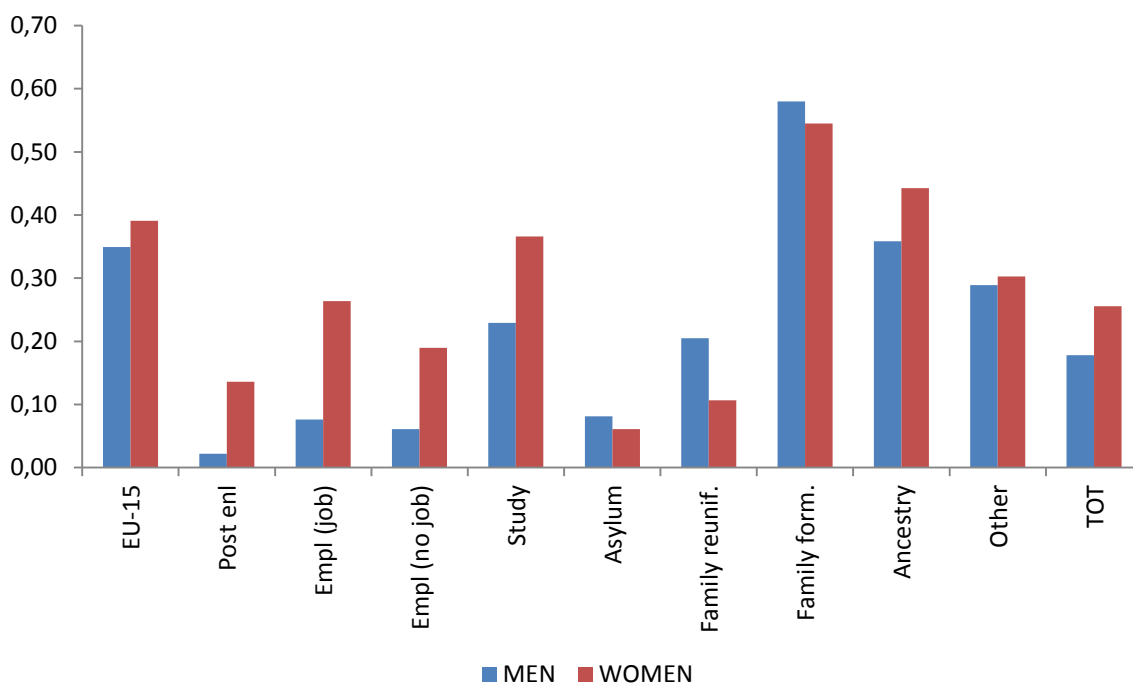
[16] This would also contribute to explain the high naturalization rates observed amongst migrant students (Cangiano, 2012)

5.3 Timing of families' migratory patterns

Estimates presented in the previous section suggest that there is a strong relationship between migratory patterns, family formation/reunification processes and the immigration routes used to enter the EU country of destination. While these links cannot be fully untangled because of the lack of data on the time of marriage or union formation, the LFS dataset does provide information on the timing of migration of the partners and on the country of birth of children. The situation where migration involves the separation and subsequent reunification of couples can be empirically analysed by cross-classifying the information on partners holding a spouse visa with the timing of migration of the two partners. Figure 4 shows the proportion of migrants (among migrants in couples) who are in partnership with a spouse visa holder who entered the country after them. Results provide some indication of the propensity of each category of entrants to apply for family reunification. Consistent with the "traditional" pattern of male labour migration followed by deferred family reunification, male labour migrants are the category with the highest probability to be joined by a spouse visa holder. In contrast, female labour migrants only have a high propensity to apply for spousal reunification if they enter the country with a job offer, a difference that might be explained by the better employment conditions of the jobs for which employers can sponsor working visas. Similarly, male students have a higher than average probability to apply for family reunification, unlike female students. The situation where household migration was initiated by the female partner is also very uncommon amongst asylum seekers and the residual category 'other'. In line with expectations, migrants entering via family-related channels are the least likely amongst non-EEA couples to apply for subsequent spouse or marriage visas.

Figure 4– Proportion of migrants in partnerships with, and arrived before, a spouse visa holders by immigration status on entry and sex. 2008 (%).
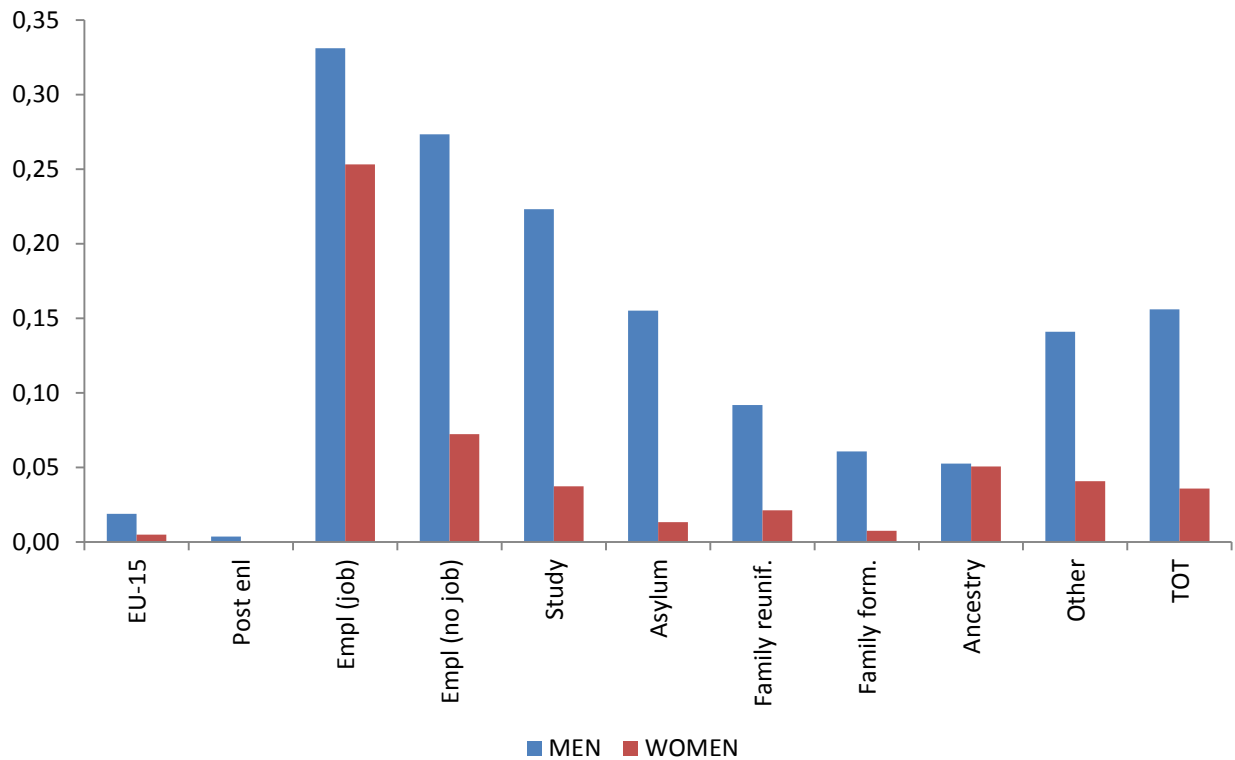
Source: Own estimates based on the EU-LFS

More clues on the sequential links between migratory patterns and family formation can be obtained by looking at the year of entry of both partners. Figure 5 attempts to do this by showing the proportion of migrants who migrated simultaneously (i.e. in the same year) with their partner. The differences observed by immigration category largely reflect the expected impact of immigration restrictions, i.e. simultaneous migration is more common when mobility is unrestricted – as in the case of EU and ancestry-based migrants. However, the simultaneous entry of couples is also prevalent amongst asylum seekers, reflecting the consequences of forced relocation of families.

Figure 5 – Proportion of migrants arrived in the host country in the same year as their partner by immigration status on entry and sex. 2008 (%).
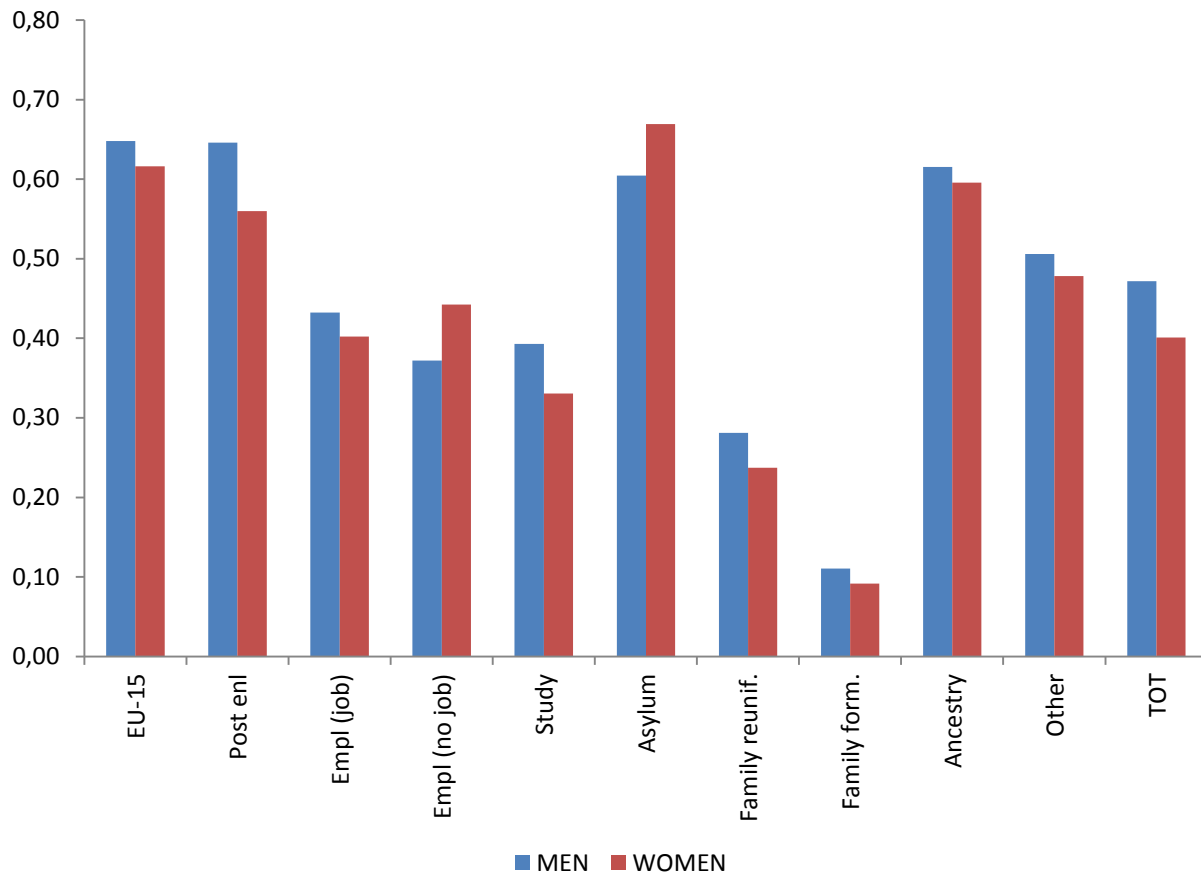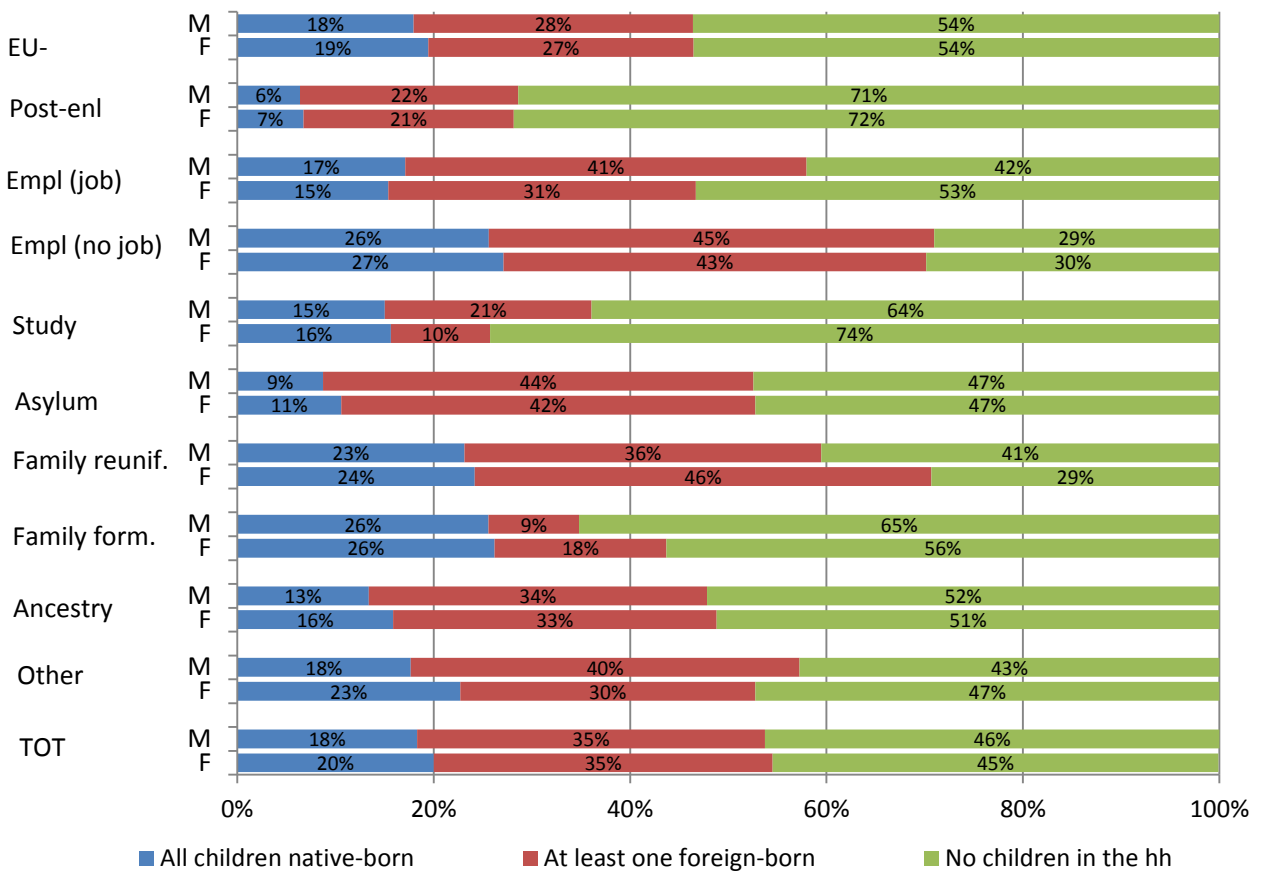

Source: Own estimates based on the EU-LFS

Results shown in figure 6 about the country of birth of children born to migrant couples largely confirm the above discussed family-related migratory patterns by category of entry. The pattern of (male) labour migration followed by (female) spousal reunification appears to be highly family-driven: these categories feature at the same time the highest percentages of all children born in the countries of destination and amongst the highest share household with at least one child born in the country of origin[17] (among children currently living with parents at the interview). Asylum migration, also family-oriented in nature, is further characterised by the low percentage of couples with all children born after migration. In turn, non-EEA

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[17] Being born in the country of origin however does not necessarily mean that children were born before their parents' migration – i.e. migrant parents might decide to travel to the country of origin to give birth. This probably applies to some categories (e.g. EU nationals) more than to others (e.g. asylum), affecting the comparability of the estimates used for building the chart.

students and post-enlargement EU-12 migrants feature the highest percentages of childless couples. Amongst the students, this might be at least partly due to the younger age. The absence of children amongst Eastern European migrants can be explained by the common practice of leaving their children behind (Banfi and Boccagni 2011), and possibly also by the low fertility levels in the countries of origin.

Figure 6 – Proportion of migrants with cohabitating native-born children by immigration status on entry and sex. 2008 (%).
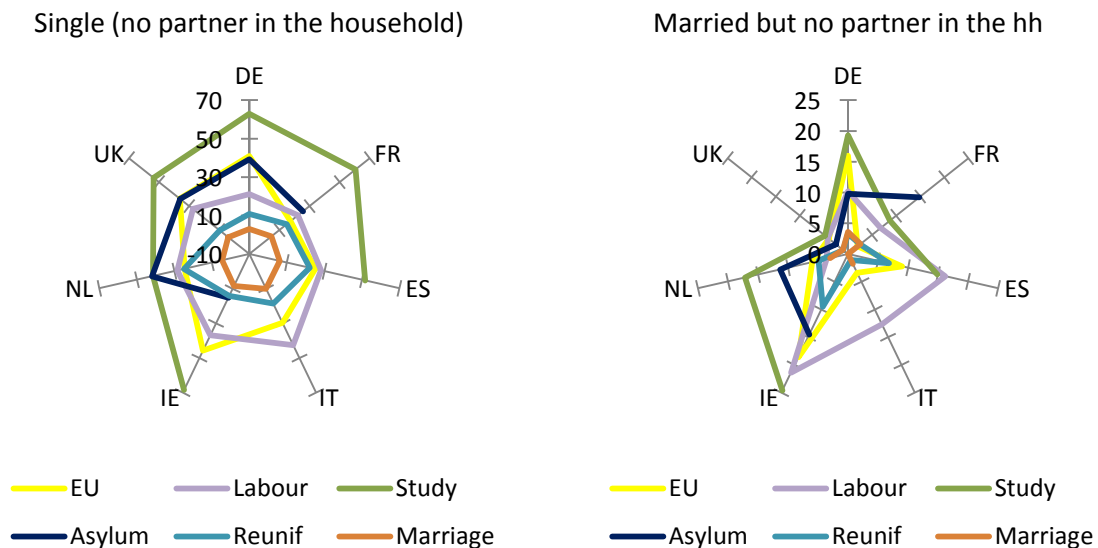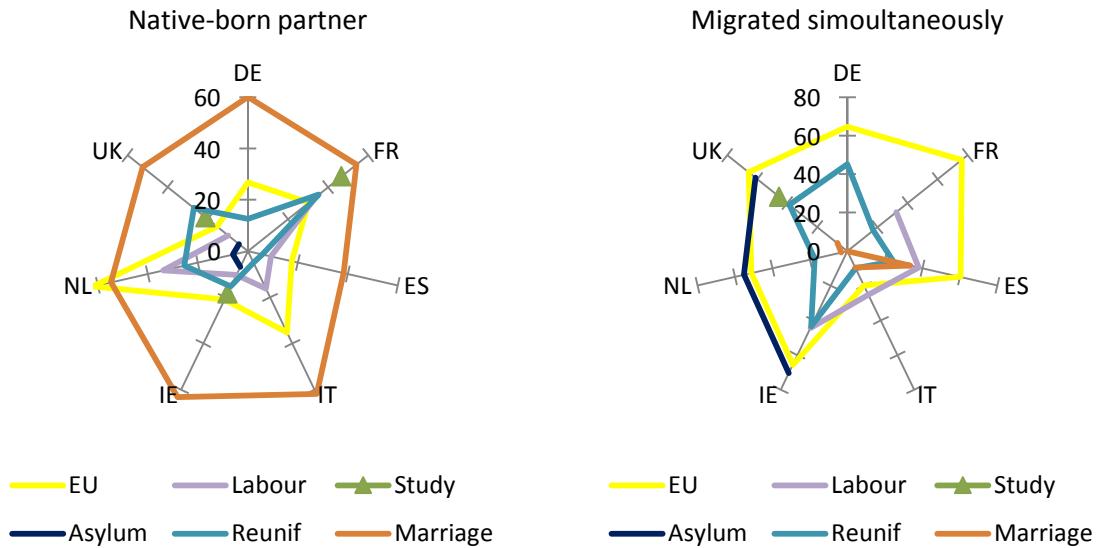

Source: Own estimates based on the EU-LFS

5.4 Cross-country differentials

The last part of our analysis looks at cross-country differences in search of clues about the impact of national policy contexts on migration and family patterns. Owing to limitations in the sample size for some countries, and having extensively discussed gender differences in the previous sections, country-level analysis was only carried out for both sexes combined and after aggregating some categories (i.e. EU25 and labour). Results broadly confirm the above illustrated differences by immigration category on entry (figure 7)[18]. For example, the strong family orientation of asylum migration, high frequency of simultaneous migration of EU partners and of individual migration amongst students, prevalence of marriage migration when a native-born partner is involved are recurring features in virtually all countries of destination. These are also features that can be considered as less affected by immigration regulation. Nevertheless, some differences are also apparent at national level. For example, simultaneous migration is far more common in the UK and Ireland than in Italy (where it is also infrequent amongst EU migrants). In the UK, the higher probability of simultaneous migration is also reflected in the lowest chances of separation of married couples (which are highest in Ireland). Spain stands out as the country where all categories of migrants are least likely to form family unions with a native-born partner, and where marriage migrants are most likely to have arrived with their (foreign-born) partners. The probability for students to settle and form a union with a native partner is twice as high in France as in the UK.

Figure 7 – Cross-country comparison for selected indicators. 2008 (%).


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[18] Results are shown only for sub-samples of at least 50 cases.

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Native-born partner — Migrated simoultaneously

Legend (both charts): EU, Labour, Study, Asylum, Reunif, Marriage

However, the main differences emerge in the family-related profile of labour migration across EU countries (figure 8). In the more recent immigration countries of Southern Europe (see Italy in the chart) labour migrants are more likely to be single or leave their partner behind and subsequently apply for family reunification. In the settlement countries of continental Europe labour migration appears more likely to involve the movement of families from the beginning of the migratory journey, facilitated by provision for joint entry of the two partners when the 'primary migrant' has a highly qualified job offer. In the UK, the high proportion of both simultaneous entries and labour migrants applying for subsequent family reunification seems to reflect the diversified nature of labour admissions at both ends of the skill spectrum.

Figure 8 – Country profiles for the family-related migration patterns of labour migrants. 2008 (%).
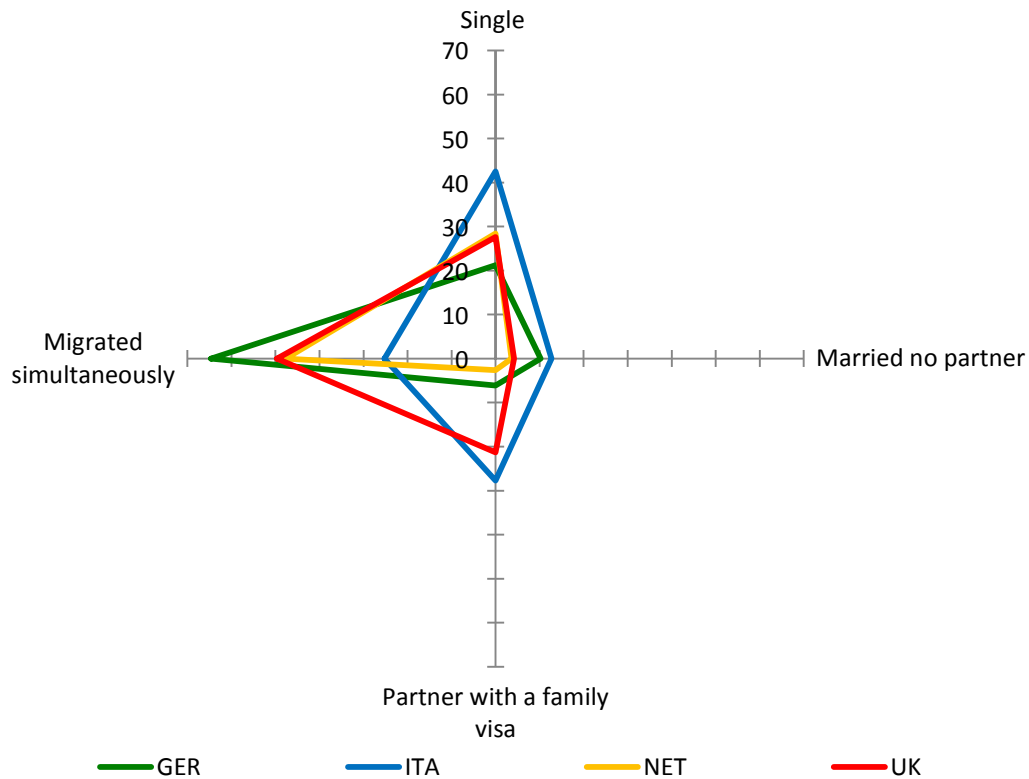
Source: Own estimates based on the EU-LFS

Narrowing down the focus on immigrant couples with both partners living in the country of destination, the time elapsed between first migration and reunification of the spouse provides further indication that family-related migratory patterns vary across national contexts. For example, among recent migrants the average time lag between the arrival of the two partners is more than twice as large in Italy (2.4 years) as in the "old" immigration countries (0.7 years in Germany, 0.9 in the UK and 1.0 in the Netherlands). Further analysis is required to gauge the extent to which these differences depend on the national admission frameworks, as well as their implications for the settlement of migrant families and the stabilization of the immigrant population.

6. Conclusions

The main research question addressed in this paper was how (broadly defined) admission channels affect the household composition and the timing of family migratory patterns entering the EU. To answer this question we built on a conceptual framework centered on the assumption that migrants (and migrant agency) dynamically respond to opportunity structures imposed by policies and regulations, developing

coping strategies to realize their migratory projects. In particular, we conjectured that the household is a key analytical entity to understand how immigration policies are negotiated in family migration strategies because it functions as a decision-making unit in the selection of members who lead the chain and in the choices around joint or separate migration of other family members, settlement or return. Our empirical analysis was 'loosely' based on this interpretative framework rather than focused on testing specific assumptions and had mainly explorative purposes. The cross-sectional nature of our data – and especially the lack of retrospective information on the family situation prior to migration and on the timing of union formation (or dissolution) – did not allow us to isolate the effects of selection processes superimposed by immigration regulations vis-à-vis the different motivations, aspirations and plans that also characterize the migration and life course trajectories of different groups of migrants. Nevertheless, our findings provide significant new evidence on the links between admission routes and family-related migratory patterns that is available for the first time on a comparative EU scale, laying the foundations for more refined analyses based on purposive data (e.g. longitudinal surveys that track family/legal status changes).

Our estimates are consistent with prior expectation that cross-country variations in migration policy regimes – for example in terms of openness to labour, student and asylum migration – generate different compositions of the recent migrant population by category of entry across EU receiving countries. This was thoroughly documented and discussed in previous analyses of the same dataset (Cangiano 2012). Furthermore, the channeling of migrants into admission routes that select individuals on the basis of nationality and primary reasons for migration appears to be strongly associated with distinctive family-related migration patterns and migrant household composition. One major feature of this association is its gendered connotation, suggesting that admission systems tend to reproduce established gender roles. For example, women are almost as likely as men to be found in a single person household if they migrate for study or labour reasons, while pronounced gender differentials in the household composition are found for most other entry categories (e.g. asylum seekers, with half of men being in a single person household and 4 in 5 women being either single mothers or with their partner and children). Outside the marriage migration channel – which is for both sexes the primary route of entry for non-EU migrants marrying with native-born partners – migrant women, e.g. arriving via the labour or study routes, are also significantly more likely than men admitted via the same channels to form a couple with native born individuals.

The intersection of gender and entry category is also apparent in the patterns of non-EU family reunification, with the traditional model of male migration followed by reunification with a female spouse still dominant across entry categories. Couples with a male labour migrant and a female spouse are also the most likely to live in households with children, which testifies to the family-oriented nature of this migratory pattern. In contrast, the situation whereby women move first and subsequently bring in their partners is only common when they migrate with an offer of employment obtained prior to migration (i.e. most likely for a highly-skilled, well-paid job), but not if they migrate in search of a job or for study

purposes. This result is consistent with the notion that the operation of family and social networks is a highly gendered process. It also resonates well with criticism of means-tested sponsorship requirements in family reunification policies that neglect economic inequalities embedded in segmented labour markets where women are disproportionately excluded or relegated in the lowest paid jobs.

Another significant finding aligned with the conceptual underpinning that guided our analysis is that immigration restrictions constrain opportunities for couples and families to migrate jointly. This is demonstrated by the much larger proportion of couples who migrate simultaneously via categories that are not (or are less) subject to immigration controls (i.e. intra-EU and ancestry-based migrants). Further research is needed to provide a deeper understanding of the long-term implications of deferred migration for the integration of migrant families in the receiving society. For example, different family reunification strategies may result in differential pathways into the labour market of both primary migrants and reunifying spouses. In turn, this raises policy questions about the economic role of family migration and the potential impact of regulatory constraints on migrant outcomes into the host labour market (cfr. Cangiano 2012).

Similarly, there is significant scope for future research shedding new light on the cross-country and inter-group differences in the observed family patterns by entry category, and on the role of national admission systems. An interesting result emerging from our analyses is the difference between the old, settlement-oriented, immigration countries (France, Netherlands, Germany) where limited and predominantly highly skilled labour migration is often associated with the joint movement of migrant families, and the 'new' labour-oriented admission systems of Southern Europe where large scale migration of lesser skilled workers is most likely to involve the movement of single individuals and of 'primary' migrants initially leaving behind, and subsequently reunifying with, their families. This resonates with the stratification of the right to family reunification – by education, gender and class – highlighted in the recent literature on family migration (Kraler 2010). However, group-specific household strategies – e.g. the high propensity of post-enlargement EU12 migrant couples to leave, at least temporarily, their children behind – are also likely to play a role and call for further investigation of how regulatory frameworks are negotiated by different groups of non-EU migrants.

Finally, our results reiterate that a deeper understanding of the operation of social and family networks, and of the mechanisms through which immigration 'reproduces itself' through a 'multiplier' effect, requires a more articulated consideration of how different types of flows are associated with distinctive settlement patterns and 'demand' for family reunification – and how this is institutionally constructed. This has also significant implications for migration scholarship focusing on the demographic dynamics and impact of migration as well as for migration debates that simplistically emphasize the achievement of numeric targets.

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