Civic stratification, gender and family migration in France:
Analysis of interviews with migrants and their family members

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About the project

Family related migration has been the dominant legal mode of entry in Europe for the past few decades, but has become increasingly contested in recent years. Granting migrants the right to family reunion has traditionally been considered as promoting the integration of migrants into receiving societies. However, in current debates over the ethnic closure of migrant communities and the alleged “failure” of integration, the “migrant family” is increasingly seen as an obstacle to integration - as a site characterised by patriarchal relationships and illiberal practices and traditions such as arranged and forced marriages. As a result, family related modes of entry have been increasingly subject to restrictions, while the existing conditionality has been tightened up.

The research project analysed family migration policies in nine European countries from two angles. First, the project analysed policies and policy-making in regard to family related migration in a “top-down” perspective through the analysis of legislation, public debates, as well as through expert interviews. Secondly, the project analyses family migration policies from a “bottom-up” perspective, by investigating the impact of conditions and restrictions on migrants and their families and the responses and strategies migrants adopt to cope with these and to organise their family lives.

This project was financed under the programme New Orientations for Democracy in Europe (NODE, www.node-research.at) which is committed to exploring the future democratic development of Europe and its effects on citizens as well as politics. Within the perspective of the NODE-Research, the project on Civic Stratification, Gender and Family Migration Policy in Europe aimed at:

- Providing an empirically grounded analysis and evaluation of family migration policies in a broad range of immigration countries in Europe, including Eastern Europe;
- investigating how family migration policies create civic stratification;
- providing empirical evidence for the consequences of stratified rights for migrants immigrating for family related reasons;
- analysing how migrants challenge and cope with the constraints imposed by family migration policies;
- analysing the relationship between “civic integration” and social and political integration, and conversely, relationship between civic stratification and social and political exclusion;
- applying a gender based analysis both to the analysis of family migration policies and the impact of these policies on migrants; and
- developing basic principles that might help governments to design and implement fairer immigration legislation.
Table of contents

1 INTRODUCTION .................................................................................................................. 4
2 SAMPLE DESCRIPTION AND CHARACTERISTICS .............................................................. 4
3 MIGRATION PATTERNS AND LEGAL CATEGORIES ............................................................ 6
   3.1 LEGAL STATUS STRATIFICATION OF FAMILY MIGRANTS ........................................... 7
4 LEGAL STATUS, CIVIC STRATIFICATION AND GENDER ................................................ 11
   4.1 ACCESS TO FAMILY REUNIFICATION: LEGAL AND PROCEDURAL OBSTACLES .......... 11
   4.1.1 Economic obstacles: Poverty and lack of resources .................................................. 13
   4.1.2 Failed reunification and separation from children .................................................... 15
   4.1.3 Failed regularisation of family members: separation and irregular status ............. 16
   4.1.4 Transitional irregular residence during long procedures ....................................... 19
   4.1.5 Shorter and less problematic procedures: Easier access and conditions ............. 20
   4.2 PERCEPTIONS OF DIFFICULTIES AND CONSTRAINTS FOR FAMILY REUNIFICATION .... 21
   4.3 ARBITRARINESS OF ADMINISTRATIVE PRACTICES AND UNFAIR TREATMENT OF IMMIGRANTS ........................................................................................................... 22
   4.4 ACCESS TO INFORMATION, ASSISTANCE AND RIGHTS .............................................. 23
   4.5 ACCESS TO CITIZENSHIP ............................................................................................. 23
5 EMPLOYMENT CAREERS AND SOCIAL MOBILITY OF FAMILY MIGRANTS .............. 27
   5.1 BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT INTEGRATION OF FAMILY MIGRANTS ....................... 27
   5.1.1 Employment careers of Sans Papiers ....................................................................... 30
   5.1.2 Employment careers of women ............................................................................... 31
   5.1.3 Deskilling and professional downgrading ............................................................... 32
   5.2 ACCESS TO SOCIAL RIGHTS AND EXPERIENCE OF DISCRIMINATION ................... 34
   5.3 HOUSING CONDITIONS ................................................................................................. 36
   5.4 PERCEPTION OF SOCIAL MOBILITY .......................................................................... 37
6 FAMILY LIFE AND IT’S TRANSFORMATIONS IN THE MIGRATION CONTEXT ........... 40
   6.1 CHANGING GENDER ROLES AND COUPLE RELATIONS ........................................... 40
   6.2 WORK – FAMILY LIFE BALANCE ................................................................................ 45
   6.3 LEGAL STATUS AND POWER RELATIONS .................................................................. 46
   6.4 GENERATIONS AND CHILD - PARENT RELATIONS .................................................... 48
   6.5 TRANSNATIONAL FAMILY LIVES ............................................................................... 50
   6.5.1 Importance of remittances .................................................................................... 52
7 SUMMARY .......................................................................................................................... 54
8 REFERENCES AND SOURCES .......................................................................................... 56
9 APPENDIX .......................................................................................................................... 57
1 Introduction

This analysis of family migration in France from the perspective of migrant experiences is based on 17 semi-directed interviews with immigrants and their family members. The interviews were conducted during the first half of 2007 in the Paris region (Île-de-France) by Florence Lévy.

The sample comprised overall interviews with 20 persons that either immigrated as family members to France themselves or sponsored the immigration of partners and other family members. Nearly half (9) of the interview partners were approached through a social centre in a suburb in the west of Paris (Île-de-France). The interview partners were introduced to the interviewer by the social worker at the local community social centre (who is assisting them with administrative matters, including residence permits). In regard of this way of recruiting interview partners, the sample represents a higher proportion of migrants (and immigrant women) that have legal or familial problems and therefore addressed the local social services for assistance.

Most of the interviews were carried out with individuals, except three interviews with a Chinese couple, with two sisters of Turkish immigrant background, and with a Moroccan woman accompanied by her mother-in-law (also a Moroccan immigrant woman). The interviews were generally carried out in French, except for one interview conducted in Chinese (Mandarin) mother tongue.

2 Sample description and characteristics

Overall 20 persons were interviewed, who had either a personal migration biography (as spouses or family members, minor children joining their parents) or were children of immigrant parents born in France (see Appendix Table 3).

With regard to the gender ratio, the sample included 16 women and 4 men (2 Algerian, 1 Bulgarian, 1 Chinese). The nationalities and countries of origin of interview partners covered above all migrants from North-Africa (5 from Algeria, 3 from Morocco) and Sub-Sahara Africa (2 from Mali, 1 from Ethiopia), from Turkey (3) and Bulgaria (1), as well as 4 immigrants from China. One woman was born in France (dual French-Algerian citizenship). It thus included the most important nationalities of familial immigration in France.

Immigrant and residence status

The second generation of immigrant’s children, that either were born in France or had immigrated as children with their families, was represented with five persons in the sample.

Nearly half (9) of the interviewees in our sample have acquired French citizenship. Five had a temporary and a permanent resident status, and one man was in an irregular status (though in process of regularisation) at the time of the interview.

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1 Furthermore three expert interviews with representatives from the migrant rights association CIMADE, the citizen support network “Education without frontiers” (RESF) and the former police prefect of Paris, Yannick Blanc, were conducted, which are not considered in this analysis (see policy report France).
### Immigration/residence status: Number of interviewees and Interview number (see annex)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Number of Interviewees</th>
<th>Interview numbers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>French citizenship (naturalized)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1, 2, 4, 7, 8, 8, 11, 14, 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temporary residence permit (one year, renewal)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3, 5, 10, 13, 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permanent residence permit (10 years)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6, 12, 13, 15, 16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irregular residence status</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Our sample included both “extremes” of the immigrant status: on the one hand naturalised immigrants and second generation (dual citizens) were represented in nearly half of the cases; on the other hand, family migrants who were in an irregular residence status for some time before admission or regularisation were also well represented. Nevertheless, the contexts and reasons leading to an irregular residence differed greatly. In some cases their situation has been regularised for family reasons, either their children were born in France (e.g. Interview 3; Interview 13), or they obtained subsequently a residence status as spouses (e.g. Interview 2; Interview 9; Interview 10). Whereas in the first case the irregular stay after marriage bridged the separation period during the ongoing family reunification procedure, in the second and third case the marriage with a partner met in France was a way to legalise the irregular status. In some cases other family members had overstayed their visitor’s visa (e.g. for medical treatment) and remained for longer a period in an irregular status (Sans Papiers) in the country (e.g. grandmother Interview 7).

### Immigrant generations

The persons interviewed represented various immigrant generations in terms of the period they immigrated: One person immigrated between 1970 and 1979 (Interview 16), six between 1980 and 1989\(^2\), six between 1990 and 1999\(^3\) and seven more recently, from 2000 until 2007\(^4\). Five were from the second generation born or grown up in France\(^5\).

Also concerning the age structure there were different generations represented in our sample, about half were in the medium age group (5 persons aged between 20 to 30; 8 between 31 to 40; 4 between 41 and 50; one older than 50 and one older than 60).

These immigrant generations had very different legal conditions of entry and residence due to the changing immigration system and also socio-economic conditions for integration.

The sample also reflects the developing family migration patterns over time. Algerian families, for instance, can comprise three generations and return migrations: where the father or both parents were already in France, children joined them or were born in France, returned to Algeria for marriage and family formation and later remigrated to France.

In the 1970s and 1980s, for example, the older women from North-African or West-African countries joined their husbands in France only after many years of separate family lives. As their biographies show, these decisions were mostly made by husbands or relatives and not by the women themselves (Interview 3, 15, 16).

The sample also outlines the increasing diversity and change of “traditional” family migration patterns of a male primary migrant worker that is joined by his wife and children, with the emergence of more diverse female migration patterns (e.g. as skilled professionals) or the more frequent bi-national partnerships. New patterns appear among the second generation,

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\(^2\) Interviews 7, 8 (x2), 12, 14, 15
\(^3\) Interview 1, 4, 6, 11, 13F, 17
\(^4\) Interviews 2, 3, 5, 9, 10, 13M, 14
\(^5\) Interview 4, 7, 8 (x2), 17
such as young women who marry partners from their parents’ country of origin and become sponsors for their husbands.

**Education level and professional characteristics**

Concerning education and professions, a smaller number (5) had a higher university education (three men and two women). Several have obtained other professional diplomas (social work, accountant/social mediator, commerce, secretary and hairdresser).

Five among the interviewed women (all from Maghreb and African countries) had no professional qualification and employment before they came to France and all of them work as cleaners or domestic helpers. Regarding the second generation migrant women, patterns are different - one works as a supermarket cashier and others have completed higher university studies (2 women of Algerian and Turkish background).

Most of the interviewees were employed in a few occupational sectors (cleaning, domestic work, child care, security sector, tailoring), largely corresponding to a highly segmented and also gendered employment pattern of immigrants.

**Roles in the migration process**

In most of the cases under review women and children were sponsored by (male) immigrants\(^6\) or women joined their French spouses (Interview 1, 6); in two cases women married in France after independent immigration (Interview 9, 10).

Among the women, several sponsored the arrival of their husbands\(^7\), thus reversing the “traditional” roles in family migration processes of former male dominated labour migrant generations (though such a male dominance cannot be generalized for all immigrant groups). Three men in our sample came to France as dependant spouses joining their wives; one Algerian man came as a single migrant and later married in France.

An observed pattern of marriage migration in the French context is that of French second generation migrants who marry and sponsor foreign spouses from his/her former or the parent’s country of origin (we use the term “double reunification” for this case; see Policy report France; Thierry 2008). In the interview sample six cases corresponded to such a pattern\(^8\).

3 Migration patterns and legal categories

Some general types and patterns of familial migration may be distinguished with reference to Kofman and Meetoo (2008):

- **Marriage migration**, where foreign partners join their spouses living in France. This includes as well *bi-national* marriages of French and foreign citizens (that constitute a proportion of 13% of all marriages in France in 2007, see Appendix Table 2; CICI 2008: 56). In 2007 38,054 foreign spouses of French citizens were newly admitted.

- **Familial reunification**, where a family gets reunited after migration of one parent, and family members join the primary migrant some time after his immigration, as was the “classical” pattern of “guest workers” in the 1970s and 1980s, with women and children following a male labour migrant for settlement: Due to change in labour migration patterns, legal restrictions for family reunification and also the statistical effect of naturalisation of immigrants (do not fall under rules of family reunification, but family of French) are more and more rare: 18,891 family members of (third country) foreign citizens were admitted in 2007.

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\(^6\) Interview 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 11, 12, 14, 15, 16

\(^7\) Interview 4, 7, 12, 13, 17

\(^8\) Interview 2, 4, 7, 9, 14, 17
Whole family migration: The pattern of whole families that immigrate at the same time is still rather limited, as it is reserved to high skilled professional migrants (on a temporary basis).

Moreover, immigration for various reasons (studies, work, etc.) often is at the origin of subsequent family relations in France. For foreigners this implies a change of their residence status, in cases of an irregular status of family members (parent, children) it can also entitle to a regularisation.

We may furthermore add the temporary forms of family migration that constitute an important aspect of transnational family life of migrants. Mobility rights for family members are important in the case of medical visits of family members (as for example aged parents from developing countries) that may apply for visa for medical visits, or as visitors for familial reasons (for example in the case of need of care for family members). We consider this type of temporary family migration in addition in our report, since this was often mentioned by the interview partners when it came to obstacles for migration.

Due to growing diversity of the French immigrant society, internationalisation and increasing international mobility the patterns of family migration are becoming more diverse and complex, such as second generation migrants who bring their spouses or single migrant women that bring their children left back for some time in the home country.

Migration biographies often combine diverse types of family migration during the life course. The increasing complexity of these family migration biographies and constellations becomes evident in our sample: it is shaped by legal stratification (different status), the emerging patterns of transnational family relations (over two or more generations), or the practices of multiple, cyclic or multi-directional migration (return migration for family formation).

3.1 Legal status stratification of family migrants

Within the French legal migration system different rights are allocated to different legal status categories of family migrants. Major distinctions are made according to nationality and residence status of sponsors and family members involved.

The status stratification of family members implies different procedures, criteria and conditions for admission and residence. In this sense, status shapes access to rights, integration conditions and also access to French citizenship.

In the current legal framework the main legal status categories of family migrants comprise:

1) Family members of French citizens,
2) Family members of foreign (third country) citizens living permanently in France and
3) Migrants with intense personal and familial ties (other than eligible family members of the first and second category).

1) Foreign spouses and family members of French citizens

In the first case a specific practice of civil status transcription and visa admission procedure is applied.

Spouses of French citizens are admitted through a procedure depending on the place of marriage. In case of marriage abroad the admission is preceded by a procedure of transcription of marriage into the French civil status (which is done by the French consulate authorities in the country). In case of serious indications of a fraudulent marriage auditions of spouses and an inquiry by the state attorney (of Nantes) (within 6 months delay) can be engaged (the state attorney can demand an eventual annulment of marriage). The consulate has to issue a long term residence visa to the spouse (which can be refused in case of fraud). The sincerity of the union is object of a systematic control. Since 2006 the
presentation of this entry visa is obligatory for the issue of the subsequent residence permit in France.

Each year the temporary residence permit of the spouse of a French citizen has to be renewed. In case of cessation of life as couple (divorce, separation within a period of four years of marriage) or a marriage of convenience the renewal of a permit is refused or it is retreated. However, foreign spouses are protected from loosing their residence status in case of divorce for reasons of domestic violence. Since 2006, the automatic entitlement to a permanent residence permit has been abrogated; however, after three years of marriage or residence, family members can apply for permanent residency, but the issue is subject to the authorities' discretionary scope (depending on integration).

The majority admitted under this category of family migration are spouses of French citizens (in 2007: 38.054), but an important proportion also concerns parents of French children that are entitled to a residence permit9 (see CICI 2008: 56).

2) Family members of (non EU) foreign residents - procedure of family:

Family reunification procedure in the strict sense concerns only third country nationals living regularly in France and who sponsor the immigration of their spouses or minor children living abroad. At present, this procedure involves to a large proportion (74%) only one single family member (who is sponsored).

As a general rule, family members have to stay abroad during the admission procedure; only exceptionally a regularisation in the country is allowed10.

Generally, bringing family members outside the family reunification procedure can be sanctioned: the residence permit of the sponsor can be retreated (this does not apply to those with absolute protection against expulsion and Algerian citizens).

The criteria for admission relate to adequate resources and housing conditions, and to the positive evaluation of language and civic knowledge of family members in the home country (see Appendix Table 4).

Generally, after three years of continuous presence, migrant family members can apply for a permanent residence permit; in case of separation from the spouse, the residence permit can be retreated or the renewal refused, except in case of birth of a child or for holders of a permanent residence permit. In case of a divorce for reasons of domestic violence, the dependant spouse does not lose the residence permit. Exempt are also Algerian citizens for whom separation during the first three years does not justify the retreat of the residence permit.

In the second category further distinctions and specific regimes for family reunification apply for certain groups of immigrants (nationalities, status groups), which concern above all citizens from the francophone African countries, recognized refugees and accompanying family members of high skilled employees:

- Citizens from former francophone African colonies with special bilateral migration agreements: In particular for Algerian citizens a range of exceptional rules for family reunification apply, which guarantees them in some respect more favourable conditions of family reunification compared to the general regime.11 An important difference from the general family reunification regime is that spouses of Algerian, Moroccan, Tunisian and

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9 In 2006 10404 and in 2007 10987 parents of children with French citizenship were admitted (CICI 2008: 56).
10 In 2007 11,4% have been regularised exceptionally (ex-post) in France, the large majority (88,4%) was admitted through intermediary of ANAEM offices and consulates abroad (CICI 2008: 57).
11 E.g. concerning access to permanent residence permit; less situations of retreat of residence permit (e.g. polygamy is rejected); extended right to family reunification also for children that have been placed under custody of family members by the juridical regime of kafala)
francophone Sub-Saharan African nationals obtain the same residence permit as the foreigner they join.

- **Refugees**: The family reunification for refugees is subject to a distinct procedure in the competence of the foreign ministry. Under this special procedure no criteria of examination and conditions are legally defined, including also delays and legal remedies that are not specified. The foreign authorities have to issue an entry visa for family members, which is a condition for the subsequent issue of a permanent residence permit in France (which spouses and minor children of refugees are immediately entitled to after entry). The visa issue through consulates in the country of origin is based on verification of family relations with the refugee, which in practice means long delays in the instruction of applications. In relation to problems of civil status registration and documents in many countries of origin, refugees often face difficult and long procedures of admission of their family members.

- **High skilled labour migrants** (delegated employees, permit “competence and talents”, researchers) have a facilitated procedure for bringing their family members called “accompanying family”; the application has to be made by the employer and is reserved to family members (spouse and minor children) of high skilled employees (management and high level staff earning > 5000€). Spouses of high level employees have no free access to labour market as other family members have, but only under restrictive conditions.

3) **Migrants living in the country due to familial and personal ties**:

For migrants with intense and stable personal and familial ties in France a procedure of regularisation from within the country is possible on a discretionary basis: The intensity, stability and durability of familial and personal relations are subject to authorities’ appreciation; in this sense it is evaluated whether the refusal of a residence permit would constitute a disproportionate curtailment of the migrant’s right of private and family life. The evaluation of integration (related to republican values) of the applicant plays as well an important role for regularisation.

Generally the number of regularisations due to family reasons has increased in the recent years. Also collective regularisation programmes (in 1997-1998 and 2006) specifically addressed the regularisation of migrants with family ties in France, as the latest one in 2006 for families with children born in France and enrolled in school (see Sohler 2008).

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12 Art. L314-11-7° und 8° CESEDA 2006
13 A recent Amnesty report documents the long average delays of instruction of eligibility of applications (15 months), followed by further ten months on average until the consulates in the countries of origin convene family members for interviews and verification of civil status (AIF 2007:4).
14 They are issued a residence permit as “visitors”. The application has to be submitted by the employer, no prior examination of housing conditions is required. The residence permit does not entitle the spouse to access to labour market without permission. If he wants to work he has to change his residence status (permit authorising for work) at the prefecture, which means that it can be denied in relation to the labour market situation. Only if he is proposed a work contract with a gross salary of 2000€, a spouse cannot be denied a work permit (for reasons of unfavourable labour market situation).
15 See http://www.ofii.fr/embaucher_un_travailleuse_etranger_54/recruter_un_cadre_de_haut_niveau_399.htm
16 This concerns all kinds of situations and personal ties that do not fulfil the conditions of other categories of family reunification or family of French, for example those having entered irregularly, those who are not married, but live in a couple relation or another form of civil partnership (PACS), divorced immigrants caring for children born and living in France, etc.
Table 1 Annual new permits, status categories (2003-2007), in %

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status category according to type of permit</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Total Family of French</td>
<td>64.3%</td>
<td>62.1%</td>
<td>60.8%</td>
<td>57.4%</td>
<td>58.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Total Family member of foreign citizen</td>
<td>23.8%</td>
<td>23.4%</td>
<td>23.5%</td>
<td>19.0%</td>
<td>20.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Total Personal and family ties</td>
<td>11.9%</td>
<td>14.5%</td>
<td>15.7%</td>
<td>23.7%</td>
<td>20.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total family permits (A+B+C)</strong> absolute numbers</td>
<td>95022</td>
<td>94741</td>
<td>92557</td>
<td>96212</td>
<td>84815</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source CICI 2008; own calculations

Also the scope of entitled family members differs for status groups: **Immigrants from third countries** are limited to bring in their nuclear family (spouse and minor children until age of 18). **French citizens** are entitled to bring also elder children and ascendants in charge.

Narrow concepts of family life apply with regard to other family forms, especially concerning polygamous family life of immigrants (a common family form in several major countries of origin of immigrants, above all in West Africa): since 1993 the entitlement for family reunification of men living in polygamous union has been restricted to one wife and children only from this partnership. Nevertheless, the (irregular) presence of wives and children from such polygamous partnerships continues to be a problem for women concerned\(^{16}\) who cannot regularize their status as family members.

Nevertheless, the third category (migrants with family and personal ties) covers in principle a broader scope of family members not covered by the regime and categories of family reunification.

In the framework of other **temporary residence** titles (visitor, health and humanitarian reasons) family members beyond the nuclear family may be sponsored. But also the grant of such visa became subject to tightened entry conditions with view to irregular migration control\(^{17}\).

The interviews carried out for this study provide examples of these various forms and legal status categories of family migrants in the increasingly complex legal immigration system.

\(^{16}\) For example, if it appears that a man, who has applied for family reunification, lives already in couple with his first spouse in France, then the residence permit for the second woman that came also under family reunification is retreated.

\(^{17}\) Persons that want to host family members for visits have to sign a certificate of accommodation (CESEDA Section 3, Art. L.211-3 – L.211-10), are subject to control of the apartment by municipal authorities and are obliged to take in charge all the costs for the visiting family member.
4 Legal status, civic stratification and gender

4.1 Access to family reunification: legal and procedural obstacles

Not only legal restrictions for admission (integration, economic resources), but also the (multiple) bureaucratic procedures (with extensive periods of examination) pose a particular problem for migrants and their family members.

Despite a legal time limit of 6 months for the examination and decision on applications for family reunification, the actual procedures and waiting periods often take much longer as our interviews indicate. This is also due to a rather bureaucratic organisation of the procedure that affords several successive steps and associated procedures of admission: first the procedure of transcription of marriage and validation of civil status (before application), then the family reunification procedure at the prefectures in France, and the visa application and admission procedure at foreign offices (consulates, local branches of immigration offices) in the countries of origin, and another procedure of residence permit issue and reception (integration contract) after arrival.

Whereas the administrative procedure has been recently simplified for spouses of French citizens, this was not the case for foreign immigrant families (in the family reunification procedure). As a consequence, the duration of the whole procedure is in practice much longer, above all when applications are refused in the first instance and appeal procedures are filed. Also protracted cases or non-decision by authorities, especially at the level of consulates in countries of origin can be a reason for retarded procedures. Protraction of procedures through authorities is also caused by control and investigations for verifying and validation of civil status documents (marriage transcriptions). In the visa procedures of home country consulates applicants have no legal remedies to enforce a decision (length of procedures is not legally limited).

A variety of administrative institutions and administrative levels are involved: the prefectures which are the competent local authorities deciding upon admission and issue of residence permits; the public integration institutions (the ANAEM, responsible for medical exam and certificate, integration contract and language tests etc.); the municipality that inquires and controls if housing and income conditions are adequate.

In cases of applications from abroad, the French consulates in the countries of origin of the applying family members are responsible for issuing the visa and also for related verification of civil status (documents), interviews with the family members or other requirements imposed on the family members.

The procedures can thus be retarded at several levels and instances. This highly bureaucratic and control intensive procedural organisation makes family reunification in many cases a complicated, time-consuming and exhausting process for the concerned migrants and their family members. In our interview sample most family reunification procedures were long and retarded by obstacles of various kinds (see overview Table 5).

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\(^{18}\) Since June 2009 the procedure for residence permits from abroad have been simplified. For certain groups of migrants (long term employees, temporary workers, spouse of French citizen, student, visitors) it provides for the issue of a long term residence visa which exempts migrants from further applying for a residence title in France (succeeding the entry visa as before). It therefore abrogated the double application procedure. Groups not concerned by this procedure: Algerian nationals, beneficiaries of family reunification, those who can accede a (permanent) resident permit, certain workers (high skilled “competence et talents”, delegate employees, seasonal workers). See http://www.ofii.fr/visa_long_sejour_titre_de_sejour_193/visa_de_long_sejour_dispensant_de_la_demande_de_titre_de_sejour_915.html (accessed on 24.6.2009)

\(^{19}\) Only recently in April 2009 the ANAEM (Agence Nationale d’Accueil des Etrangers et des Migrations), established in 2005 has been renamed and reorganised as Office Français de l’immigration et de l’intégration (OFII). See www.ofii.fr
Also in several cases appeal procedures against non-decision or refusals of applications had to be engaged to achieve the admission of family members. As a consequence family members either had to wait for a long period in the home country or remained for a longer period without residence permit in France. The legal rule that applicant family members are in principle not admitted for residence in France during the processing of their application constituted a major problem. Some examples from our interviews may illustrate the various types of difficulties encountered during admission procedures and their impacts for the concerned families.

**French– Moroccan couple – two years admission procedure (Interview 14)**

In the case of a young Moroccan-French couple, a Moroccan woman who joined her husband, a French man of second generation Moroccan origin (Interview 14), the family reunification procedure was extended for **two years.** Above all the procedure was retarded because of the marriage in Morocco and the registration process at the consulate in Morocco (transcription of marriage and civil status documents of the wife). Because of a mistake in the registration of the birth date, the authorities did not process the application. They did not inform them about the error until they demanded personally at the consulate. The husband, who lived and worked in France had to return several times to Morocco to get in contact with the consulate.

For them the communication with the authorities at the French consulate in Morocco proved to be very complicated: the husband had to travel several times to Morocco to contact the authorities, they were deprived of information on the state of the procedure, the wife living in Morocco was not permitted to enter the consulate (“If you are a foreigner, if you are not French citizen, they do not even let you enter the French consulate”). This gives an impression of the difficult access of applicants to procedures at consulates.

The young couple experienced the long separation after marriage as difficult. They maintained contact by phone and internet, but they “were fed up” with the long waiting period. In addition because of waiting she was blocked from starting to work in Morocco (in her profession as hairdresser). The husband visited her several times, however these visits were limited due to his employment and the costs.

The bureaucratic obstacles continued in France, as the wife was admitted only with a temporary one year permit (as a spouse of a French citizen), which she has to renew each year (for an unknown period of time). Again the procedures for renewal of permits at the prefecture were rather exhausting for the couple, as they imply waiting in the queue very early in the morning.

> [At] two in the morning you have to go to the prefecture. If you are a little bit late, you have to come the following day. They only take five persons, the others have to come the next day. They have to wait there until 9 in the morning. 4-5 times we went there. Both of us, my husband and I have to go there. It is obligatory. Our baby stays at home with the mother-in-law. (IP14/1: Moroccan women, 25 years old, sponsored by French husband of Moroccan origin grown up in France, part time cleaner)

**Controls and suspicion**

In the procedures, family migrants also were confronted with suspicion and controls by authorities, concerning the couple relations (marriages of convenience; irregular migration) but also security risks.

In the case of a French-Algerian family (Interview 17) the return migration of the whole family from Algeria to France in the late 1990s was blocked in the context of a restrictive visa policy in relation to security risks adopted during the Algerian civil war.

The French-Algerian woman was born and had grown up in France as a child of Algerian immigrant workers who returned to Algeria (together with her other family members) to marry and form a family with her Algerian husband at the end of the 1980s. After ten years they
applied for a return to France for the whole family (three children) as the civil war broke out in the 1990s and the security and economic situation deteriorated. The consulate authorities suspected them of Islamism which led them to refuse the visa for the Algerian husband in the first place.

We demanded for the whole family a visa. But we did something stupid, we demanded a visa separately, for me with children, my husband alone. Because when I made my Algerian passport I wore the “foulard”, and that was not possible to get a visa with foulard. The consulate did not want to give [visa] to people with headscarves after the events [civil war; Islamist terrorism].

A man at the consulate said to me when looking at my passport, oh Madam you make me scared with that photo. So I changed the passport (it had expired). I did not wear the headscarf any more for the photo.

My husband was convened to consulate. He was asked what he thought about the “foulard” and everything. At the consulate they were very suspicious about everything: religion, Islam, fundamentalism, they feared the fundamentalists. When they saw the foulard, they lump together all in the same pot.

Q: They did not want to admit fundamentalists to France.

Yes, that’s it. They lump together all (in the same pot), although we had nothing to do with all that.

My husband said they asked him an idiot question, they asked him what he thinks about the foulard. He replied that in the Muslim religion the woman must wear a foulard. And that put a black spot on his application. And his visa was really refused. So the only way my husband saw, that I would go alone with the children to France, then apply for family reunification for him from there. And that has worked. (IP17: French-Algerian women born in France, 40 years old, sponsor for her Algerian husband, domestic help)

So she had to return alone with her three children to France since the visa for her Algerian husband was denied, and had to apply for family reunification with him in France. The procedure then was relatively fast and he was admitted to come to France within 5 months after her arrival. Despite the relatively short waiting period and the good reception conditions for her (accommodation with her sisters family, quick access to social housing apartment; social benefits), she experienced this time of separation from her husband as psychologically stressing, because of the great insecurity about his admission and the fear for his personal security due to the massacres taking place in Algeria.

4.1.1 Economic obstacles: Poverty and lack of resources

The economic resource conditions were redefined more strictly for families with larger number of children, e.g. in 2007 the necessary income level has been increased in relation to family size. In practice, income and housing conditions constitute a major restriction of the right of immigrants to bring their family members, also with regard to the lower average income levels and the more precarious labour market integration (higher unemployment rates, part time and temporary jobs) of immigrants.

For several of our interview partners, the family reunification procedures were protracted because first applications were refused, when the partners could not fulfil the income or housing conditions for a family reunification. So several had to change their employment (from part time to full time jobs, take up a second job etc.) or rent another apartment to meet the legal requirements.

Immigrants from the poorer working class, especially immigrant women, could not meet the economic conditions for family reunification, already before their spouses and family members arrive.
A French-Turkish couple – three years of family reunification procedure (Interview 4)

One example is a 30 year old immigrant woman of Turkish origin who came to France through family reunification at the age of 15. She married a man from her hometown in Turkey and applied for family reunification with him in France, a procedure that was extremely difficult and protracted for three years. He waited back home in Turkey and she only saw him during holiday visits. The first applications were refused because she could not provide for sufficient income (she did not earn the minimum income SMIC\(^{20}\)). She worked part time as a supermarket cashier and still lived with her parents. To fulfil the requirements she was forced to rent an apartment (where she did not live) and to change her job to a full time employment to earn a higher income. During the very long procedure she had to pay the extra costs for the apartment alone.

Q: Do you think that you did not have all the rights you should have had?

Yes of course. For example the first time when the application of family reunification for my husband was refused, because of income or when apartment is too small. It is us that have to live in that way!

I lived with my parents, and paid a rent in parallel (where I did not live). I only took an apartment to fulfil the conditions for the admission of my husband. That is disgusting. If he would have come, we would have found easily an apartment. They demand three payments of the rent, then I lived there, but when he came, we found another, more modern apartment. I only rented the apartment for the administrative procedure.

I had to change my employment, at my workplace before I was satisfied, I had a very nice team. In the second job I did not have such a good relationship with my superior, it was not that good, but I had to accept, so that my husband could come. (IP4: French-Turkish woman grown up in France, 30 years old, family reunification with father as child, sponsored her Turkish husband, supermarket cashier)

Moroccan immigrant family – three years of family reunification procedure (Interview 12)

A Moroccan immigrant woman, who had come to France originally through reunification with her first husband 12 years ago and then divorced, some years later wanted to bring her second husband from Morocco. Compared to her own family reunification procedure, she experienced the procedure as much more difficult, because she faced serious obstacles. Only after three years of procedure the husband could finally join her and their two children (born and living with the mother in France). The first time her application was refused because of insufficient income; she then worked as a cleaner and earned 900€. She also had rented a 3 room apartment (social housing). For her second application she accumulated working hours in different part time cleaning jobs to reach the necessary income level. After one year of waiting for a decision she made an appeal, which was in the end successful.

During this long time of separation she returned to Morocco to visit her husband and gave birth to two children in France, while the father was denied entry to France. During these three years of separation she had serious difficulties to get by economically and to manage the problems with child care in her situation as an involuntary “single” mother.

Because of her long working days (from 8 in the morning until half past nine in the evening), she rarely saw her children and relied essentially on the support from family members to look after her three children and to manage working and family life. However, she had no choice: “I was obliged to work more, to get the papers for my husband.”

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\(^{20}\) The SMIC (salaire minimum de croissance) is he legally fixed minimum wage. As of the 1st of July 2008 the amount of the SMIC was fixed at a monthly gross wage of 1.321 € or a net wage of 1.037 € (for a fulltime employment with 35 hours weekly). See [http://vosdroits.service-public.fr/particuliers/F2300.xhtml](http://vosdroits.service-public.fr/particuliers/F2300.xhtml)
In addition, her husband, who had no income in Morocco during this time, could not support the family in France. Neither did she get alimony payments from the ex-husband for the child from her first marriage. Due to the stressful burden after the refusal of the application she had a nervous breakdown and health problems.

Q: How did you experience the period of three years, was it difficult for you?

Yes, it was very difficult to live. I was all alone with the children. Because of the money I suffered. My husband had no income, he did not work in Morocco. He had a business (shop) with his brother. Sometimes he earned 5 €, some other days not even 5 €. Business did not run well. (IP12: Moroccan woman, 37 years old, reunited with her first Moroccan husband of whom divorced, sponsored her second Moroccan husband, cleaner)

4.1.2 Failed reunification and separation from children

The processes of family reunification of immigrant workers from the generation of settlement in the 1970s and 1980s were not always successful. One reason is the restrictive age limit for children that could lead to a durable separation of the family. This is illustrated by two similar cases of immigrant families that settled in France since the 1970s and where family relations (marriage) with the home country continue in the second generation. The separation from some of the children is also a reason for stronger familial ties and regular visits in the home country, of which marriages of the second generation in their home country are also often a direct consequence.

Algerian family – failed reunification with son (Interview 15)

An Algerian woman, who joined her husband in France through family reunification in the late 1980s then left her 11 year old son back in Algeria in the care of her sister so that he could continue school. This was also because she did not intend to stay permanently in France in the beginning, but with the birth of children in France she settled definitively. Their son came to visit them regularly during summer holidays in France, until visa regulations were introduced.

In the early 1990s they applied for family reunification for their then 15 year old son, but at that time laws had been tightened and their application was twice refused because they could not fulfil the housing and income conditions (too small apartment, insufficient income). As a consequence the Algerian woman (then mother of four children) was forced to start working to increase the family income.

I made a mistake, something stupid. I applied for family reunification to the authorities, I did not work, my husband worked, we had 3 room apartment, when we made the application for family reunion, the prefecture refused it. Reason was that the apartment was too small, 66m2, we were 6 persons. They demanded that we move to a bigger apartment so that our son could come. It was not easy to change the apartment, the income of my husband was 8000 Francs (1220 €), that is not enough. I ran after the social service (assistance) to find another apartment, I tried everything.

I made a second family reunification application, in 1992 they changed the law. For 7 persons 66 m² would be sufficient now, they told me. But they refused again, this time because the salary was not sufficient. Then they demanded that I work part-time. The prefecture demanded that from me. I did not find part time work. I ran around for three months, but without success. (IP15: Algerian woman, 52 years old, reunited with her Algerian husband 21 years ago, sponsor for her oldest son, child carer)

Only after a procedure of seven years and a juridical struggle including appeal procedures they succeeded to obtain the admission for their son, who by then had exceeded majority age (he was 22 years old).

Interacting legal and administrative hurdles were at the origin of this failed family reunification. It also gives us an impression of the juridical labyrinths in which migrants might
get caught for many years. In all they spent more than 2100 € for lawyer’s fees in the three years of appeal procedure.

Another example of an Algerian immigrant family shows the long term consequences of a family separation. The father came to work in France in the 1970s and in the 1980s brought in successively his wife and also three of the five children through family reunification. At that time they succeeded only bringing the three youngest children to France (one by one each year), whereas the two elder children already had exceeded the legal age limit (of 18 years) for admission for family reunification and had to stay in Algeria.

This resulted in later difficulties to regularise the status of the eldest son who came to study and live in France. The family continued to struggle for the regularisation of their eldest son, which in addition caused high expenses for lawyer’s fees.

My elder brother also came later to France for his university studies. At the end of his studies he should leave the country. But my father did everything to keep him here. He took lawyers. We received a letter of eviction (order), which we appealed. This happened some years ago, end of the 1990s.

My brother had to provide an employment contract that an employer would keep him here. Or he would marry. But he had not yet met the woman of his life. So he had not that much choice. But my father had a good relation to his employer, he talked with him, and the employer gave my brother a job, as a computer specialist. Then he had the residence permit immediately, whereas my father had fought for it three years. And he spent all his money on it. It was a large part, because the lawyers are expensive. With every letter we had to take a new lawyer, my brother always had three month permits during the new procedures, with each appeal we made. During the 90s it was a bad situation in Algeria, and my father did not want at all that my brother returned. Moreover, my brother had lived with us already for 6,7 years at that time. (IP7: French-Algerian woman grown up in France, 27 years old, family reunification with father as child, sponsored her Algerian husband, university degree, searching employment)

4.1.3 Failed regularisation of family members: separation and irregular status

“Failed” regularisations of family members may lead to very difficult living conditions, either resulting in separated family life or in the protracted irregular residence situation of family members. Two particular cases from our interview sample illustrate this kind of problem resulting from failed regularisations and irregular status.

One example concerns the experience of a Malian immigrant woman (Interview 3) who lived with her Malian husband and her children born in France in an irregular status and faced particular difficulties of regularisation. In her situation, as the first wife in a polygamous relationship, (her husband had a second wife and family in Mali) the harsh consequences for women of a legal regime that prohibits family reunification of polygamous families by immigration law become apparent.

Polygamous family life and relations, common in many West African countries, are prohibited in the context of family reunification: only one of the wives (and her children) can be admitted with an official status as family members through family reunification, the others have to remain in the country of origin\(^\text{21}\). This poses a particular problem for the concerned immigrant women and their children, as highlighted in the interviews.

A Malian immigrant woman who is familiar with these kind of situations from the Malian immigrant community and her clients as a social and cultural mediator for immigrants, explains as follows:

*In practice many Malians come otherwise, not through administrative family reunification, because they do not have the means, they cannot justify the required space (of apartment) m\(^2\) demanded, also the income.*

\(^{21}\) A polygamous family life can be sanctioned by retreat of permit for the sponsor.
There are families that are already here with a first wife, who cannot bring a second. Because the second wife is not recognized, she cannot come through family reunification.

In fact, they do not come via family reunification. Since the Pasqua laws a majority of women find themselves in an irregular situation. (IP11: French woman of Malian origin, 35 years old, sponsored by Malian political refugee, social mediator)

**Malian woman, regularised after 6 years (Interview 3)**

The woman from Mali married at the age of 14 and joined her husband, a Malian immigrant worker in France, after their marriage of 15 years. She was the first of two wives in a polygamous marriage and lived in Mali with her daughter. Her arrival in France was related to her wish to have another child and also medical treatment because she could not conceive. When she came to France it was originally only for a short time (with a tourist visa), she became pregnant and overstayed without a residence permit. She had left her 4 and a half years old daughter in the care of her mother in Mali.

The husband originally did not want her to stay in France and refused to apply for a family reunification for her. Instead he had applied for the family reunification for his second wife to enable her come to France, which he hid from the wife already in France.

She had stayed for two years in an irregular status when the authorities first discovered her and her child at home when they made their regular control visit in the course of the family reunification procedure (for the second wife). Due to his family already present in France, the authorities refused the application for family reunification of his second wife.

However, the legal rules for family reunification deprived the regularisation of her residence in France and they demanded her to return to Mali for the family reunification procedure.

Nevertheless, mistrust against her husband (whom she suspected not to bring her again to France and not supporting her family reunification), and the problem arising of the care for her child born in France in relation to an insecure return to France, made her decide to stay in France. The decision was mainly taken to secure her family life in France and to prevent a potential separation from her child. So she was again caught in an irregular status, in all for six years.

Subsequently she had to struggle for her regularisation without the help and in opposition to the interests of her husband. The husband denied further support “he told me that I had to get by alone to have my papers”.

She had problems to explain her situation to the authorities and to deal with the authorities because of language barriers, she also ignored the legal system completely. Only three years after the authorities discovered her irregular situation, she applied on her own for a regularisation at the prefecture (exceptional regularisation – family ties). She was supported and encouraged by her French language teacher to apply for regularisation and with the legal assistance of a municipal social worker she finally succeeded in obtaining her residence permit. She encountered further obstacles for her regularisation, in the first time it was refused because she had not entered the country via the regular family reunification procedure. Finally, she obtained a residence permit on the basis of her (in the meantime) three children born in France. The regularisation gave her however a less favourable and secure residence status (only temporary one year permits, renewable each year during five years), than she would have been entitled to family reunification.

Despite her de facto family life in France (living in couple with her husband and her children for seven years) procedural obstacles (necessary return and waiting for admission abroad) deprived her and the children from a regular status and (social, employment) rights.

A major problem for her was the separation over many years from her daughter left behind in Mali, whom she could not visit as a consequence of her irregular status, which also deprived her from applying for family reunification with her daughter. After her regularisation she wanted to bring her daughter to France.
It is a long time that I have not seen my daughter, I miss her very much. And my mother also.

Q: Would you prefer to live in Mali or here?

Here, but with all of my children. I have children that are in France, and a child in Africa, that’s what I don’t like. I would like to live here with all of my children. (IP3: Malian woman, ca.38 years old, joined her Malian husband, regularised after 6 years of irregular stay, cleaner)

But her husband opposed the immediate immigration of the child for reasons of family interests in Mali, since he wanted to give the 11 year old daughter to his aged sick mother, so that the girl would take care of her. The reunification of the child in such a way became part of a power struggle between the parents that reveals conflicting familial strategies and interests over the migration or custody of children. These strategies are also shaped by familial structures and parental care practices in the home country, as this case may highlight.

**Chinese family – regularisation – four years of family reunification (Interview 13)**

For a Chinese couple that stayed irregularly in France, it was a hard road to family reunification after the regularisation of the woman and children born in France. The Chinese couple, both aged around forty years and originating from the rural province of Wenzhou in South China (where the majority of Chinese in France come from) entered France irregularly shortly after each other in the early 1990s. They had then already family members (brother and sister) living in France, though the majority of family members lived in Italy. They left their first child in the care of the grand parents back home in China.

Both began working in the informal tailoring business to gain their living in France (and above all to pay back their debts for the expensive journey, ca. 10.000€). The woman gave birth to a child in France.

The man was arrested by the police, detained and expelled to China during the first year, while the woman stayed in France with her six months old child.

After four years of irregular presence and joining the *Sans Papiers* movement, which emerged at that time in the event of mobilisations for a collective regularisation programme, the woman obtained a residence permit in the course of the then implemented regularisation measures (in 1997/1998). Her status was regularised on the basis of her child born and enrolled in school in France and she obtained a temporary one year permit that had to be renewed each year. Six years later she was issued a permanent residence permit.

A year after the regularisation of his wife the husband came back to his family in France, again he entered irregularly and indebted to pay 13.000 € for the passage. In France they applied for regularisation of his residence status at the prefecture.

But after one year of procedure the prefecture denied his application for a residence permit as family member and demanded him to leave France to apply for family reunification from the home country. They learned from other Chinese migrants that it was impossible for them to succeed with a family reunification at that time, because they did not fulfil the required income level and apartment size (they lived on 10m2); So they refrained from applying for family reunification until their (economic) situation would allow for it. Consequently, the husband remained with his family as *Sans Papiers* in the country for four years; during this time they had another child.

Four years later, when they finally could fulfil the conditions for a family reunification, the man returned voluntarily to China for the procedure. The woman rented a new apartment (47m2) for which she had to pay 800€ rent per month to fulfil the housing conditions required for a family reunification. She started the family reunification procedure that finally would take four years. During the procedure several obstacles retarded the family reunification: In the first

22 The placement of children in the fostering of other relatives, often also implying work and services of children, is a common social practice in West African societies.
place the application was refused (for unknown reasons, after five months) and the wife appealed against the decision with the assistance of a lawyer (free of charge), which was successful after one year.

However, then the visa at the embassy in Shanghai was blocked for a long period. Each time the husband travelled over a long distance (one day trip) to the embassy in Shanghai, they sent him back again without giving him any information or explanation. He travelled to the embassy more than ten times. These travels and the whole procedure were very costly for him. The embassy demanded proof of their continuing family life and that they still formed a couple, given their long time of separation since the wife emigrated to France. (The time when the husband stayed in France in irregular situation was not taken into account by the authorities). During this investigation they even demanded private letters exchanged between the couple (to read them), and also for evidence of remittances, phone call bills and flight tickets (she returned three times to see him in China).

Only when the wife appealed with support of a Franco-Chinese association to the mediator of the Republic in France, the embassy finally issued the entry visa for the husband and the son some months later (four years after application, three years after admission by the prefecture). In all they lived for eight years separated (with interruption when the husband stayed irregular in France), and the husband was only regularized nine years after his wife.

This example highlights the vicious circle, where family members are caught in an irregular status and thus separated for a considerable period of time. The conditions of economic resources were particularly difficult to fulfill for this Chinese family, since the woman had to maintain the family (children) alone with a low income job, and in addition had to pay back debts. Above all it points to the arbitrariness of family reunification procedures in the home country, with less effective means of intervention and legal remedies from the family members in France. It also indicates that Ex-Sans Papiers encounter much more obstacles in practice to make use of their right of family reunification after regularisation.

4.1.4 Transitional irregular residence during long procedures

The conditions that can not be fulfilled (e.g. resources, housing), but also a long processing of applications encouraged some of our interview partners to (over)stay in a “transitional” irregular status. The motive was mostly to avoid the expected long period of separation from spouses or children.

This was also the case with an Algerian man, who came to France with a 6 months valid visa for his marriage with a second generation Algerian woman (at that time she was not yet French citizen, only after family reunification). He overstayed his visa because he did not want to separate from his wife during the procedure of family reunification and he already had given up his business in Algeria and prepared his emigration before leaving (thus he had also financial resources to live on in the initial period). After trying to apply directly in France for his residence permit as family member, which the authorities refused him, he overstayed his visa and remained in France during the processing of the application for family reunification. Thus he stayed for eight months in an irregular status in the country, after the positive decision of family reunification he returned back to Algeria for the formalities for his entry visa. He had problems at the departure when the police controlled his passport and detected that his visa had expired, for which he had to pay an administrative fine. In Algeria he renewed his passport in order to avoid problems with the consulate for the issue of his family reunification visa.

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23 The « médiateur de la République » is an independent institution which residents can appeal in cases of conflict with public administrations and services. http://www.mediateur-republique.fr/fr-01-00
When I came for marriage I was in regular situation. After the marriage we went to the prefecture to apply for my residence permit for family reunification. But unfortunately they did not want to give me the permit directly in France. They told me I had to return to Algeria. My wife had to make the application at the prefecture, then waiting for instruction of application of the ex-OMI (now it is ANAEM).

At the prefecture they consulted me, but told me it is a risk to take for me, that I could stay irregular here in France with my wife, waiting until the application is decided, when I get the invitation for the visa at the embassy in Algeria, then I could return for the visa formalities. They told me that I had to wait approximately 6-12 months for the decision. Because of this long time I preferred to stay in France. I also did not want to leave my wife alone here /…/. She already had found an apartment. (IP2: French-Algerian man, 33 years old, sponsored by French second generation woman of Algerian origin, security guard)

Despite an already quasi regular status and a “normal life” with the partner and family in France, as the Algerian man experienced it, the denial of a provisional permit during the procedure for him meant a restriction of mobility, deprivation of social security and regular employment; and also the risk of police arrest in the course of (more frequent) controls to detect Sans Papiers in public spaces.

Also others, like the Chinese man (mentioned above Interview 13) stayed irregular after a failed regularisation in the country, as they were aware of not being eligible to family reunification because of the poor economic conditions they were in at that time. So he stayed and returned to China to start the family reunification procedure, when their situation had stabilised and they were able to fulfil the conditions.

4.1.5 Shorter and less problematic procedures: Easier access and conditions

On the other hand, those migrants interviewed that reported a rather short and uncomplicated procedure in their subjective experience, were mostly in a more favourable position with regard to the legal position of sponsor and migrating family member (bi-national couples/spouses of French citizens, accompanying family member of a highly skilled professional, spouses of refugees), that in all cases correlated with a higher social and economic status (higher education and higher income). Exemption from resource and housing conditions generally facilitates their access compared to foreign couples and family reunifications. However these procedures are subject to enhanced bureaucratic obstacles, more systematic control procedures (concerned potential marriage of convenience) and more restrictive practices of visa deliverance (for spouses of French citizens see the report of Cimade 2008). An easier access to family reunification also depended on the access to professional (judicial) intermediaries dealing with the procedure facilitating information and communication with the authorities. This may be demonstrated by two examples from our sample:

In the first case of a Bulgarian spouse accompanying the wife that came to France as high level employee of a multinational enterprise, the administrative applications for residence permits of the family were done by the employer and their judicial services. The Bulgarian couple never had to deal with the authorities themselves, neither before entry nor for the renewal of the permit which was “quasi-automatic”, depending on the employment contract of the woman. So the whole procedure never posed a problem for them, and the whole family (one son) came together to France (Interview 5).

The renewal of our current permit is every year, automatically in our case. Because the company where my wife is employed, has a lawyer who deals with that. I do not have to wait in queues at the prefecture. It is nearly automatic. (IP5: Bulgarian man, 49 years old, accompanying spouse of Bulgarian high skilled professional, sports professor working as part-time athletic trainer)

Another case of a Chinese woman (Interview 10) who spent two years in France in irregular status before marrying a French man and regularising (as spouse of French citizen) in France, highlights that the “easy” procedures are influenced crucially by the handling of the
legal system. In this case the French husband was a lawyer, an expert in foreigner’s residence law, who managed the procedure for his wife and later the family reunification with the daughter of his wife (still living in China) without any problems.

After regularisation she applied for family reunification procedure for her 16 years old daughter, left behind in China (before she would attain the age limit of 18). With the support of the husband she obtained a visa for her daughter within 6 months.

My husband agreed that I apply for family reunification with my daughter. But he told me it was more complicated than with the marriage. You do not get the papers within three months. He made all the applications (at consulate, ANAEM), he did it perfectly. We did everything and it was very quick. She could come six months after the application. (IP10: Chinese woman, 45 years old, independent migrant, regularisation of irregular status after marriage with French husband, unemployed)

Controls may be perceived less “annoying” when procedures “worked out well” and were relatively short, as in the case of a migrant woman from Hong-Kong who obtained her visa within 4 months (and 6 months after marriage in Hong-Kong), after an inquiry about a potential marriage of convenience by the consulate authorities. They conducted several interviews about their private life, with her and the husband.

I married my husband F. in Hong-Kong. We made the application at the consulate in Hong-Kong. We had the interviews there, one with me (alone), one with both of us, and one with my husband alone. We had two times, three interviews.

My interview was quite long, it was a sort of inquiry. With questions about how we have met. They were interested in our love story. Because they wanted to verify if it was a sham marriage (“mariage blanc”). They interrogated much about our relationship, how we have stayed in contact, how often I had come to France, if I have met the family of my husband, where the family (of husband) lives, etc. The woman interrogating me noted my answers, in the interview with my husband they verified. They also verified if my husband had come to Hong-Kong several times, to see if it was a long lasting relationship.

Q: About the inquiry, interviews, what was your feeling about that, was it annoying?

For me it was okay, I was not annoyed by interviews, but I did not think that it was an inquiry. But it was going well. (IP1: French-Chinese woman from Hong-Kong, 44 years old, sponsored by her French husband, social worker)

As a Malian woman (Interview 11), who came as spouse of a recognized refugee, pointed out in her case, it is often “chance”, depending on the civil servant dealing with the application that decides the actual outcome. She obtained a regular status after entry with a tourist visa, despite this not being the “regular procedure”. From her point of view “she was lucky” that her application was admitted in France, whereas other Malian migrants in a similar situation at that time, like her aunt also married to a political refugee, were not regularised in France: her aunt was then expelled by force to Mali.

Also these examples of relatively short and less problematic procedures for the concerned, show the unpredictable, arbitrary character of procedures, and the important influence of status, legal assistance and intermediaries in procedures.

4.2 Perceptions of difficulties and constraints for family reunification

It is also through own or experiences of persons in the closer social network (often within the family) that migrants perceive changes in the system over time and unequal treatment. Several interview partners, especially those from the earlier immigrant generation, observed a more restrictive practice of family reunification compared to the earlier periods.

Often this was linked to the perception of a general deterioration of living and integration conditions of immigrants and their children, especially as regards employment and housing situation.
They compared their own experience with family reunification when they came as spouses to join their husbands in France, with the experience when they were themselves sponsors for other partners or the experience of their children who marry foreign partners.

Many women of the earlier immigrant generation considered their own family reunification procedures as less difficult than as the ones they sponsored themselves for their husbands and children (in the 1990s) or the ones of their children (in the more recent time).

However, not only the change of legal conditions or administrative practices over time, but also of their own role in the family reunification procedure was at the origin of such evaluations.

A change of perspective on these procedures is also related to the fact, that one is experiencing the family reunification procedure from the “other side” and more actively involved in the administrative procedures (as sponsors dealing with the application and administrative matters in France). Perspectives and expectations of family life have also changed: they did not accept as “normal” any more that families and spouses live separated, as they probably did in earlier decades, when (temporary) immigrant workers lived alone in France and only visited their families in the home countries once a year.

In the light of the administrative problems with the family reunification for her son, an Algerian woman now advices her other sons to marry women in France:

My son started one year ago the family reunification procedure for his wife. Now it is slow. She has made medical examination. 88 € for medical examination, they demand pay rolls, rental payment attestations, employment attestation, insurance for apartment, social insurance, tax bill, they demand many things.

Q: What do you think about all these applications?
I think it is difficult. I think that my four sons (born here in France), I don’t think that they will take women from Algeria, because now it is very hard. For the administrative procedure…

Q: You will advice your other children to marry women from here?
Yes. It is easy. But there it is too difficult, one cannot. But my other son, already had his girlfriend in Algeria. But I said, for the others, no.

Q: Is he annoyed by that?
Yes, it takes much time. I hope that the other children will marry here in France. (IP15: Algerian woman, 52 years old, reunited with her Algerian husband 21 years ago, sponsor for her oldest son, child carer)

4.3 Arbitrariness of administrative practices and unfair treatment of immigrants

From her own experience as immigrant, which was favourable in her case, and as social mediator for migrants in an association since 10 years, a woman from Mali considers administrative practices as highly arbitrary, as people are not treated equally and authorities do not apply legal rules as they should.

She thinks that laws on family reunification have always been tough, especially concerning the income and housing conditions, which most Malian immigrant families were not able to fulfil. However, she considers such legal restrictions regarding apartment size and resources as justified in order to avoid difficult living conditions for these families (Interview 11).

A Moroccan immigrant woman, the mother of a French-Moroccan man with a Moroccan spouse, evaluates the long waiting periods and the only temporary residence permit granted to her daughter-in-law as a harassment and discrimination of French citizens that marry foreign partners. She also thinks that French citizens are in this respect disadvantaged
compared to other foreigners that in her view have easier access to the permanent residence permit

4.4 Access to information, assistance and rights

One major difficulty was that the interviewees had only very limited access to information before and during the procedure. Many found it difficult to get reliable information; for most the legal framework remains highly intransparent, which is also a consequence of the frequent changes of legal and administrative framework concerning residence permits, family reunification and naturalisation rules.

Migrant networks as information source

Initial information on legal procedures and ways of dealing with authorities and problems is often provided in personal social network of friends, family members or migrant communities. Together with social and legal assistance associations or public services of the municipality they are major intermediaries in the procedure for family migrants interviewed.

It took time to get the information, I got the information through my friends. Chinese friends that were in the same situation. I also met people at the Protestant Chinese church. But there are many unlucky Chinese, Sans Papiers. Not people like me. But it was good, they talked with me, gave me information. (IP1: French-Chinese woman from Hong-Kong, 44 years old, sponsored by her French husband, social worker)

Before I came to France I informed myself about legal conditions for residence, asked friends of mine who were in France, asked them how it works with the papers when you get married in France. They told me that I had all the rights of having [...] papers, ... there were people who got it in the country “sur place”, that means they made the family reunification in the country, in France. (IP2: French-Algerian man, 33 years old, sponsored by French second generation woman of Algerian origin, security guard)

The information on administrative practices experienced by other migrants that circulates in migrant networks, shapes also the strategies of dealing with administrative rules and institutions. This is especially the case with migrants who had to cope with life in an irregular status and therefore could not access public services for assistance; they relied primarily on the information and support of friends and community networks for jobs, accommodation and for advice.

For legal advice and defence in procedures, migrants turned generally to migrant support associations or public (community) social services or lawyers.

As we saw in our examples, the effective access to family reunification often is only possible through appeal procedures, which afford professional legal assistance by associations and lawyers. Though migrants had access to such legal assistance this could be sometimes also very costly for the concerned family members (paying assistance of lawyers).

4.5 Access to citizenship

Access to citizenship for family migrants interviewed was an important issue:

- First, several of the interviewees had acquired French citizenship thus personally were no more subject to foreigners and immigration laws; this made their perspective different

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24 In fact the law discriminates in the case of foreigners from certain countries: The family members of Algerian, Tunisian, Moroccan or francophone Subsaharan African citizenship are entitled to the same residence permit as the family member they join in France. This means that the joining spouse and children also are granted a permanent residence permit if the immigrant in France has a permanent permit. In contrast, foreign spouses of French citizens from the same countries are generally only entitled to a temporary permit, thus a less secure residence status. See La Documentation Francaise, [http://vosdroits.service-public.fr/particuliers/F11170.xhtml](http://vosdroits.service-public.fr/particuliers/F11170.xhtml) (accessed on 24 June 2009).
from those immediately concerned by immigration laws: however, they still had to deal with legal hurdles of immigration laws as they were either sponsors for foreign partners or other family members (children, parents). So they still were personally concerned by separation and difficulties.

- Secondly, those naturalised were of consensual opinion that the naturalisation was important for their employment career and equality.

The French citizenship regime allows for citizenship acquisition of children of foreign parents born and grown up in France based on entitlement (at their majority age) by declaration. In the case where one parent is French or himself/herself born in France the child obtains citizenship at birth. Acquisition of citizenship through marriage with a French citizen is facilitated; however, conditions have been made more difficult (with the reform of 2006 in view of limiting “circumvention of procedures of citizenship acquisition through marriage”), by way of extending the required period (of the marital relation) from 2 years up to 4 years after marriage (before application for citizenship). Requirements of integration and “assimilation” have been upgraded for acquisition of nationality.

As outlined above, nearly half of our interview partners have acquired French citizenship.

From the interviews it became clear that civic integration through naturalisation is a major way to overcome the second class status as foreigners.

A main motive for naturalisation was to overcome the discrimination in regard to access to the public employment sector, a motive that was important irrespective of origin, class and education level.

But also negative experience with administrative procedures and bureaucracy was a motive to acquire French nationality, in order to secure the presence and status in the country. This motive was emphasized by those migrants that had a difficult integration trajectory and faced many legal and administrative hurdles. In this respect citizenship is seen as an “insurance” for being discriminated against as foreigner.

A French-Algerian man (Interview 2) naturalised only very shortly (3 years) after arrival together with his wife. For him citizenship was a win-win situation, because he could keep also his Algerian citizenship and gained some advantages, but for him citizenship has no emotional, symbolic value.

*I applied for citizenship to avoid the queue at the prefecture, maybe also for having an employment in the public sector.

Q: You wanted to work in the public administration?

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25 For children born in France of two foreign parents: entitlement to citizenship at majority under the condition of a continuous or discontinuous residence in France for 5 years since the age of 11. A minor born in France has the possibility to acquire French citizenship by anticipation, by a declaration after the age of 13 (between 13-16 declaration by parents). From the age of 16 minor children born in France can declare on their own their will to acquire French citizenship.

26 A foreign spouse of a French citizen can normally acquire French citizenship by declaration after four years of marriage, under the conditions of a still existing marital partnership and common life (affective and material) and a sufficient knowledge of the French language. The necessary period of marital relation is increased to 5 years if the foreign spouse cannot prove his uninterrupted and regular presence of minimum 3 years in France since marriage. The ministry of immigration in charge of naturalisations examines and registers the demand, which can be opposed for reason of “indignity or default of assimilation to the French community” (other than linguistic). Such a default of assimilation above all envisages persons (foreign spouses) living in polygamy or condemned for violence against minors up to 15 (mutilations). Furthermore the delays during which the government can oppose the acquisition of citizenship via marriage has been extended up to two years.

See CICI 2008: 164f; and http://vosdroits.service-public.fr/F2726.xhtml (accessed on 24.6.2009)

27 French law allows for dual citizenship and does not make immigrants renounce their former citizenship; especially those originating from former colonies of Maghreb and francophone African countries have facilitated conditions for naturalisation.
Before, yes. In the municipality or like that. In certain organisations they demand the French nationality. That is why I applied for citizenship.

Q: Was it only a paper for you, or did it have also an important symbolic value for you?

An insurance. It is better than a permanent residence permit, because I kept my Algerian citizenship as well. So the French nationality is a plus. I demanded it together with my wife, we had the citizenship at the same time. But it is just a paper like that, not of special value. Because it is not the misery that brought me to France; I lived well in Algeria. (IP2: French-Algerian man, 33 years old, sponsored by French second generation woman of Algerian origin, security guard)

For an immigrant woman of Chinese origin (who naturalised after five years of presence) besides the right to vote and to be admitted as a civil servant, also the feeling of belonging to and of being recognized as part of French society was crucial.

I had the right to apply for citizenship one year after marriage (living together), it was easy then, now it is more and more difficult. Now they demand three years of living together, before it was one year. I applied only a little bit later for citizenship, I thought about it, because you should have the feeling of being (half) French. At the beginning I did not have this feeling.

Q: What changed with naturalisation for you?

I can vote. I can vote. I can be civil servant. That is why I have passed the exam (Concours) for becoming civil servant. But also the feeling, I am French, half French.

Q: What is that feeling about?

I am French, the people cannot threaten me, cannot disrespect me, I am like you.

I was not really threatened, but you are minority. A feeling of deficit, insufficiency. (IP1: French-Chinese woman from Hong-Kong, 44 years old, sponsored by her French husband, social worker)

Also others who plan to apply for citizenship, such as a Moroccan woman working as a cleaner (with a permanent residence permit living for 12 years in France) expect improvements with French citizenship, this also with regard to bringing family members to France:

Q: What will change with French citizenship for you?

I could bring my parents here, I don’t know. It is a good thing, you can vote, you can work for the municipality. If you don’t have the French citizenship you cannot work there.

Q: You would like to work at municipality?

Yes, but if you don’t have citizenship they don’t give you work. (IP12: Moroccan woman, 37 years old, reunited with her first Moroccan husband of whom divorced, sponsored her second Moroccan husband, cleaner)

Many see the major advantages of citizenship for their lives in access to voting rights and opportunities of public employment.

For a second generation woman of Turkish origin cultural values also played an important role, in the sense that naturalisation was a means to distance herself from her conservative and patriarchal familial and cultural background (of her Turkish parents), which she experienced as very oppressive and thus disapproved completely. On the contrary, she assimilated easily and willingly to the French culture, which she experienced as liberal and integrative (especially concerned women’s liberties), and citizenship acquisition in this respect was an affirmation. As in her case, naturalisation can also be a source of conflict within families, because she applied for citizenship individually, against the will of her father, to whom naturalisation meant an “act of treason”. Furthermore, she adopted a French first name with naturalisation (a quite usual practice in the French citizenship regime), which in her opinion was favourable for employment integration.

Q: Why did you demand for naturalisation?
For me it was a personal choice. I wanted it because I wanted to be a candidate for administrative employments, I wanted to have the right to vote, etc. It was more a political choice. At that time we had the habit to say among us foreigners that the foreigners who had naturalised were regarded as better than those who did not naturalise from the point of view of French society. But I personally did not feel disregarded.

I did not discuss it with my parents, my father never wanted to discuss it, with my father no discussion is possible, one only has to obey. The first time I had the naturalisation forms, he threw them in the garbage. For my father it was an act of treason of his culture, of our origins, (the language)... It was a disgrace. He never wanted to demand naturalisation.

I was determined, I wanted to naturalise anyhow. I could not talk to anybody about it at that time. (IP8/1: French-Turkish woman grown up in France, 35 years old, family reunification with father as child, commercial employee)

Especially with regard to social rights most interviewees noticed no real difference between foreigners or citizens in daily life. This perception goes along with the awareness of discriminations that persist in daily life (independent of citizenship and despite naturalisation) because of origin, being from poor working class or neighbourhood, of having “too many children”, or ordinary racism because of the colour of one’s skin.

For many, the meaning of being a citizen is coupled to **de facto** equal rights and their personal (familial) attachments, not to an abstract national identity. In this sense the question of (one single national) identity and symbolic meaning of citizenship is not crucial or negated, as expressed through statements such as the following: “One does not change” or “it is only a paper, not more”.

The high symbolic value accorded to citizenship, with recently introduced citizenship ceremonies in the context of the conservative UMP government policies to promote national identity, is commented critically by some: As the two French second generation women of Turkish origin commented on the ceremony of citizenship award of the younger sister held recently:

> All foreigners, even there were some with veils, had to swear, the vice prefect held a speech, about the good citizen, citizenship rights and duties. In my opinion the people do not care about it, everything they want is their national card. It is a theatre play.

> The French state does a favour to us by giving us the nationality. That is how it is seen from the side of state, it is a favour done to foreigners. As if we were privileged. One communicates the image of the well integrated immigrant. We are the good ones.

> I think that this is ridiculous. Either they are good, or not. That is no question of your nationality, that is only a question of your personal conscience, of common sense.

> It is true that many people apply for citizenship for other motives than we had. (Interview 8, sisters of Turkish origin)
5 Employment careers and social mobility of family migrants

Generally, employment careers of immigrants in France are characterised by their disadvantaged position compared to non-immigrants: immigrant's average unemployment rates are twice as high, poverty rates triple and income levels three times lower compared to (non-immigrant) French (Mikol/Tavan 2006). Qualified immigrants also more frequently face occupational downgrading and more often occupy precarious types of employments (temporary contracts, part-time work – especially immigrant women are overrepresented in part time jobs).

These disadvantages persist in the second generation of immigrant children born and educated in France, to a higher degree those of Maghrebian, Turkish and South-East Asian origin, despite the fact that most of them are French citizens. The persistence of inequalities is an effect of several factors that coincide: legal discriminations (of foreigners), societal discriminations (because of origin) and the overrepresentation of immigrants in lower income working class. As recent studies have shown, discriminatory practices of employers against the second generation youth also contribute to exclusion from the labour market and higher unemployment rates among second generation youth (Meurs/Pailhé/Simon 2005).

Legal access to labour market for family migrants

With regard to family migration, it is important to notice that, as a general rule, the residence permits of family members (family reunification) are coupled with the authorisation to work and access to labour market (no need for work permit). However, a large proportion of employments, about one fourth of all employments or 6-7 million, mainly in public sector and certain liberal professions is reserved to French citizens, which means an important legal discrimination for third country foreign citizens in regard to labour market access (Groupe d’étude des discriminations 2000; Leandri 2009).

5.1 Barriers to employment integration of family migrants

In practice family migrants face difficulties in accessing employment and are often restricted to less qualified and unstable jobs. Reasons for this are disadvantaged starting conditions on the labour market as newcomers with regard to French language proficiency and professional qualifications (diploma and experience) that are not recognized or not transferable, affording language training, vocational retraining or a recognition procedure for diploma. In particular for migrants from non-francophone countries the language barrier was a major obstacle for finding work in their former profession. Their employment integration was thus accompanied by longer periods of unemployment, language and vocational retraining or by a temporary (part time) employment in lower skilled jobs.

Labour market integration afforded in most cases a longer period of professional retraining in France. Such vocational training was provided and (financially) supported by public labour market service. Some employment careers of the migrants interviewed highlight the different ways of labour market integration and specific problems encountered.

An example of a successful reskilling and employment integration is a woman who was a social worker in Hong-Kong before her emigration. She managed after some time to return to her former profession in France. However during a period of four years she did language and professional training and worked in small jobs. This was possible after a retraining (of one year) to obtain a French diploma as social worker, a training that was subsidised by the public employment service (ANPE). The professional diploma, but also her voluntary work in a French-Chinese socio-cultural association, later her employer, were crucial for her successful employment integration in this qualified sector. However, she experienced limits to her professional career advancement: She continued to work in the intercultural French-

Chinese association, although she acquired the formal qualifications (she passed the admission exam for public administration officers in France) and the French citizenship permitting access to work in public sector. She hesitated to start a career in the more secure employment in the public sector, as she lacked self-confidence (above all with view to linguistic competences) to work in a mainstream institution.

Despite less favourable and unstable working conditions in the social sector (especially low income levels as it is common in the associative social sector), she valued the scope for personal development and autonomy at work. She only sees a downgrading in relation to the income level compared to her former income as social worker in Hong-Kong, but not in professional life as such. Her labour market integration process was facilitated by the relatively good economic situation and support (of her French husband) and her voluntary engagement in an intercultural association that facilitated contacts with French. Though she faced no major economic integration problems, she considers the integration of high skilled professionals as difficult, because of a lack of adapted professional (language) integration schemes and public subsidies for (professional) language training.

For a former university sports professor from Bulgaria (Interview 5, accompanying spouse of his Bulgarian wife, a manager in a multinational enterprise) access to an employment corresponding to his former profession was considerably hampered in France: on the one hand, he faced difficulties because he had to learn French from zero when he arrived (at the age of 45). Secondly, his diploma and professional experience as a University sports professor (in Bulgaria and Russia) were not recognized in France. So he had to undertake a longer phase of language training, at the same time a complicated administrative procedure to get his diploma and professional experience recognized. This also included professional training (of 4 month) and exams.

For me it was a challenge to come to France, but I like the challenge, doing new things.

But it was hard, because I had to begin at zero with the French language, and this at my medium age.

The challenge was to learn French, to get equivalence/recognition of my diploma. I succeeded to have the diploma recognized; I had to do training courses (during 3-4 months). Normally the procedure is about 1,5 year, but all in all it was much longer, because administrative process lasted longer. Applications, passing commissions, finally they recognized the equivalence with many points, for my studies, my professional experience that was more than 18 years. Thus I had to pass only 5 exams.

It was annoying, but if you do not like it, you go back to Sofia. You don’t have the choice. Either you do it, or not.

Q: Did you know about this problems with equivalence procedure?

For me it was hard, it was annoying, because the administrative system is very slow, things go on very slowly. You know the problem very well. There are many administrative things.

It was very complicated for me, because they required to bring all the documents, attestations from my former employers to present my former professional work, which was demanded for the procedure. So I had to get all the papers from 3 employers in Bulgaria, from one employer in Moscow. I had to travel to Bulgaria, I had to return to get all the documents, so I benefited from visiting home. Then I had to translate everything, to attest it by a notary. And all that took a long time. That was hard, it was a little bit annoying, but that’s life. (IP5: Bulgarian man, 49 years old, accompanying spouse of Bulgarian high skilled professional, sports professor working as part-time athletic trainer)

However, despite the recognition of his professional diploma and experience he did not succeed in getting a stable job at the level of his former employments (at University). He works part time (8 hours per week) in a sports club as athletic trainer. The equivalent diploma however does not allow for access to the same level of professions as in Bulgaria (or other Eastern European country).
Q: At the university you could not be employed?

What is more difficult here in France, for proving the different diploma. In our country and in
several other countries, you are sport professor or trainer, then you can do everything, you
can exercise your profession in every university, every school (with that diploma). Here in
France in the sports sector, there are more than 20 different kinds of diploma.

Equivalence of his diploma in France is a “brevet professionnel de vie associative etc.” (very
long title)

It does not allow for teaching at university. But for foreigners I do not think that it is possible.

Q: Because administration is reserved for French?

Yes, of course. I am always the last in the queue. And in the sports domain everybody is
looking for young people. I have a young spirit, but am much older. I am soon 50 years old.

(IP5: Bulgarian man, 49 years old, accompanying spouse of Bulgarian high skilled
professional, sports professor working as part-time athletic trainer)

A 43 year old Chinese woman (Interview 10) came to seek professional opportunities in
France and stayed irregular in France for two years until she married a French man.

Already in the beginning when she arrived (irregular) she invested in French language
courses, which she financed on her own. During that time she had difficulties to find a regular
employment because she had only temporary residence permits (as asylum seeker she was
not allowed to work during procedure) and then was in an irregular status. During this time
she found an informal job through Chinese friends in a restaurant (Chinese employer).

After her marriage she became economically dependant on her French husband, while doing
the housework. He supported her financially and also paid one year of intensive (private)
language courses for her. She had small temporary jobs (as masseuse, domestic help, cleaning) for earning some additional money, mainly because she had to finance the school
fees for her daughter still living in China.

She experienced a professional downgrading in France compared to her former work in
China as a commercial employee for a national (state) enterprise (with professional
experience of 16 years). She did not succeed in finding employment in the qualified sector,
because she lacks French language proficiency for more qualified kind of work.

The barriers for the highly qualified to reach the same professional level as in their country of
origin are higher, and social declassing are often experienced more strikingly. However, as
we saw in our interview examples these migrants also have more means (family and social
support) that they can mobilise (compared to poorer immigrant workers families) to invest in
their professional integration: e.g. they could afford to pay for extra language and vocational
training due to their better income and economic position (or have better access to French
social networks for job search). Due to a better economic position they can also afford to
engage in voluntary activities during periods of unemployment, as in the case of a Malian
and a Chinese woman or the Bulgarian man, thus also to get new competences that
facilitated their social and employment integration.

Longer periods of unemployment of the spouse was less easy to manage for other migrants.
This is the case of a Moroccan woman who worked as a cleaner and had to support her
family alone (with three children), while her husband could not find work for one year after his
arrival; he did a language course via integration contract before he got a job in a cleaning
enterprise. Thus, the woman had to continue working to make a living and could not go on
parental leave.

When he came here in the first year it was hard, he did not find work. I worked, I did not go on
parental leave for my first two children born in France, until the third child, I went on parental
leave. I went to the Caisse d’allocation familiale, they said that I had a right to parental leave,
but I did not take it, because it is not much money, with five persons, that is hard… (IP12:
Moroccan woman, 37 years old, reunited with her first Moroccan husband of whom divorced,
sponsored her second Moroccan husband, cleaner)
5.1.1 Employment careers of Sans Papiers

The access to employment for migrants without regular status is difficult. Nevertheless, a rather large “informal” and quasi-formal sector of employment of Sans Papiers exists in France. Often the access to informal but also regular employments is only possible through migrant community networks.

An Algerian man in irregular residence status (Interview 9) found access to a regular employment contract (via temporary work agency) to a job as security guard in a supermarket, by means of false documents. Though this was also not easy in the first time, he managed to get a job with the help of Algerian friends and stabilised his employment (at the same workplace) throughout three and a half years by keeping his irregular status secret from his colleagues and also for a longer time from his girl-friend.

Another Algerian man (Interview 2) who was in an irregular status for eight months during his family reunification procedure did not succeed in finding employment (with falsified papers). Only after his regularisation could he find a job as security guard.

Q: So for how long did you stay as Sans Papiers in France?
For 8 months.

Q: What kind of difficulties did you have as Sans Papier?
It made life difficult, because I wanted to work. But I had no possibility to work because I had no papers. I did not work. I tried to find work as Sans Papier, but I was refused each time.

I did not find people who could help me to work as Sans Papier.

I searched jobs as salesman, as security guard, every kind of work. But nothing worked.

I made many job applications, but it did not work for me. I searched via personal contacts, via public offers, etc. (not official employment service ANPE, I had no right)

I also made a false permit, but I used my own identity. I just used it to find work. But it did not work. I bought the false permit, it cost 800 Francs (121 €). I used the false card/permit for applying for jobs, that the employer could declare me (at social security).

I searched for work via friends from Algeria. I knew them already before from Algeria, they came here before me. They told me “without papers they won’t employ you”, that I had to make a false card. So I made it 3-4 months after my arrival. (IP2: French-Algerian man, 33 years old, sponsored by French second generation woman of Algerian origin, security guard)

A Chinese migrant woman while she was in irregular status (for four years) worked in the Asian business sector of tailoring. She worked informally at home (in a very small room she shared with other Chinese migrants) and had very precarious working conditions. After her regularisation she stayed with the same employer (Asian community, tailoring in home work), but then was regularly employed and her working conditions slightly improved. She earned the minimum income (SMIC).

“The difference compared to the situation without papers was that it (employment) is much more stable now, before when there was a decline of business, I had no work and therefore also no income”. (IP13: Chinese woman, ca. 40 years old, regularisation after 4 years of irregular stay, sponsored her Chinese husband and child, sewer/textile worker)

In regard to employment careers and integration, the Chinese immigrant couple was largely restricted to the Asian community business networks (tailoring), which enabled them informal but also regular work. Irregular residence in the beginning, the repayment of high debts for their passage to France, substandard housing and the precarious working conditions (homework, employer from Asian community, extensive working hours) made their integration process difficult. In particular it constrained their possibilities of learning French.

Also the Chinese husband who arrived recently through family reunification and could find no job so far, limited his job search within the Chinese community networks (job advertisement in Chinese newspapers, friends, ads in the street) and did not consult the public employment office ANPE.
5.1.2 Employment careers of women

The employment patterns of women were different, as the women interviewed worked only in a few professional sectors: social assistance (associations), child care, cleaning and tailoring sector, mostly with precarious work contracts. Several women interviewed, who were mothers and housewives, emphasized that they were forced out of economic necessity to start working in order to increase the family income, also due to high housing costs and to secure their residence status (access to long-term residence permit). Even if they had relatively easy access to jobs, they were limited to a few employment sectors (cleaning, domestic work sector, social care and assistance sector); these jobs implied mostly bad working conditions, irregular and long working schedules as well as low incomes (SMIC level).

Women, above all those originating from rural areas (from Maghreb countries or Turkey), often emphasized the better employment and professional opportunities they found in France. In particular, the child care sector offered professional opportunities for mothers with several children, to combine child care for their own children and work, and at the same time to capitalise their experiences on the job market as child care workers (day care mothers). As our examples showed, this employment also enabled them to develop wider social networks outside their family. It furthermore made them economically more independent from their husband.

The employment career of a 52 years old Algerian immigrant woman (Interview 15) illustrates this quite well. She already worked before in Algeria as a secretary, originating from a middle class background and having a secondary education level. But she interrupted her working life when coming to France, because of her children and her health problems (related to risky pregnancies and several abortions). Only when her own children had grown up did she start to work as a child carer. Five years ago she got a permanent fulltime job as child carer (assistante maternelle) (before only part time, temporary), for which she was authorised by the public social services. At the time of the interview she had two children in permanent care living at her home on behalf of the public social services. So she has a full income (ca. 2000 €), that contributed considerably to improve (and maintain) the family’s living standard (they became owners of a house in the suburb in France and a second house in Algeria). However, she regrets not having started working earlier, above all for reasons of having her own pension.

I regret that I did not work earlier, because it is different today. I think of my pension. It is better to count on ones own salary, not to expect from children to give you something, you cannot count on that, neither from your children, nor from your husband. I have my real independence (freedom), with my salary. It is better to have economic independence. I know my husband is nice with me, but I have my independence.

Now I can decide, or we decide together for buying common things – as the renovation of our house or new car. For small things I decide on my own. (IP15: Algerian woman, 52 years old, reunited with her Algerian husband 21 years ago, sponsor for her oldest son, child carer)

Although she perceives a downgrading with regard to her professional occupation, she advanced in terms of income.

Q: Work is better here than what you did in Algeria?

Yes, the income is better. Secretary is better in view of moral, health, having peace (tranquillity), the work with children is hard, not easy. It is not an easy work.

At professional level I think that I have gone down. But a better income than as secretary in Algeria. If I would not work, in particular at the moment, we would not come through. (IP15:

Day mother or foster mother caring for children at home is a profession that has to be authorised and is supervised by public social services. For information on working conditions and admission of child carers see http://www.assistante-maternelle.biz/formation-assistante-maternelle-2007.html
Career advancement is very limited in these employment sectors, also resulting in low pensions, health problems and poverty of immigrant women at the end of their working lives (especially in case of divorce). This may be seen in the career of an already retired 63 years old Algerian woman (Interview 16), where conjugal violence added to poverty. She came to France to join her husband in the 1970s and raised eight children in poor housing conditions (social housing with 5 rooms for a ten person family). In 1986 she started to work as a cleaner to increase the family income out of economic necessity. But she had to stop working (for seven years) because of serious health problems (she was qualified as disabled and no longer able to work). At the age of 63 she receives a little pension from her work career (ca. 600 €). Shortly before she had divorced from her violent husband, and now has to finance the apartment alone (700 €) where she lives with three of her adult children. They cannot find stable employment. So in order to survive, she still has to continue to work (undeclared) for two hours per day in her former cleaning business.

Another example is a Malian woman who did a professional diploma and training subsidised by the state employment agency in France, first as an accountant, later as a social mediator. Her employment career was also interrupted by longer periods of child care and unemployment, but she managed to work in a stable, though low paid job as a social mediator in an association where she has worked for 10 years. Easy access to public child care, (subsidised) professional training and her social voluntary engagement during this time supported her employment career.

I did the training (as accountant) during 2 years, in the first year I became pregnant. I did my exam, it was not difficult for me to do the training and care for child at same time, I was still young.

Then I did an internship at the editor, where I was employed afterwards. The baby was at the crèche. I had immediately a place for the child in the crèche. I was lucky. The child was born in July and in September I put him to the crèche. I quit my job because of problems with my superior at work. Then I worked in different jobs (here and there). In 1994 I stopped working, went on holidays to Mali. When I came back I had many difficulties to find work again. I was unemployed (with benefits) and became pregnant again. In 1996 I gave birth to my second child, a daughter. I was unemployed for two years, but that did not depress me, because I was active in the social centre of my Cité30, where I organised activities (culture, cooking, ...) with the women of the Cité. At the social centre I learned about the possibility of doing a training in social and cultural mediation. I did this training (that lasted 4 months, followed by continuous formation of 2 years) and since then I work at an association, up to present. I like my work, I prefer this job to my former as accountant. Even if it is low paid, I like this work a lot. (IP11: French woman of Malian origin, 35 years old, sponsored by Malian political refugee, social mediator)

5.1.3 Deskilling and professional downgrading

As we observed, several of our interviewees who had joined their spouses experienced a professional deskilling and downward mobility, as they could not exercise their former profession in France. Only two managed to continue working in the same profession as in their home country or in a higher level profession (Interview 1, 5; Interview 11), sometimes under less favourable working and income conditions (only part time, temporary contracts, lower salary). The professional downgrading concerned mostly the male interviewees or spouses of female sponsors. On the contrary, for women in our sample - who had less often a professional paid work before emigration - migration involved integration in the labour market, often in the unqualified or low skilled work sector.

30 Cités are larger agglomerations of residential blocks (social housing)
The process of deskilling affected skilled workers and those with higher education (university degrees) alike, though in different forms. For example those foreign spouses who were merchants or in skilled professions in their home country (tailor, hairdresser) in most cases could enter the labour market only as unskilled workers, often in temporary or part time jobs. This is also true for the Algerian men interviewed, having higher professional diploma, who only found access to security guard jobs (typically occupied by immigrant men), despite their qualification and their French language knowledge.

Age, length of presence and migration perspective (settlement vs. instable temporary migration project) of interviewees influence also their perception of career opportunities and social mobility. Immigrants of the younger generation still perceive their employment integration in the unqualified sector and their deskilling as a temporary phase that they will overcome with stabilisation of their residence status or naturalisation. Others that still went through this process still have migration projects in mind (of return to country of origin or to other countries), in order to cope with social or professional downgrading, though these remain an unrealistic option for those with children born in France.

This perception is different of those that already naturalised or were born in France; above all, the second generation accepts less deskilling as they have a better status of protection and higher qualifications, they orient their employment careers to other (qualified) professional sectors. Thus, they experience different forms and causes of unemployment than their immigrant parents.

An Algerian man with a diploma as an electronic engineer who joined his French-Algerian wife (Interview 7) experienced a significant social status and professional downgrading. He did not succeed in finding a job in his profession and thus still works in a part time job as guard in a public park, a job he found through a friend. He speaks good French and language is no barrier for access to employment. The young couple faces economic difficulties since his wife, a second generation woman with a French university diploma, has problems to find a stable employment.

He [my husband] has experienced a real social downgrading. At all levels: professional, social, all. Economically, I work a little bit, but do not earn much, he works part time, we have not much income, it is very difficult. Before he never had problems with money, his father gave him everything, he had a job. He had no rent to pay. So he never before experienced economic difficulties. He always thought when coming to France you advance, but not descend. But at present France is different compared to the time when our parents came, who found an employment, who could accept every kind of work. Also me, with a French diploma, I still do not make it to find an employment.

My husband gave up completely to search employment in his profession (as electronic engineer). He is searching for one and a half year, two years. In recent time there is not much demand for this.

He succeeded in having two interviews for employment in his profession, but was not employed. He has also worked some time in the electronic sector as temporary workforce. I think he is a little bit annoyed by that. Not that much, but I perceive it, I did not know him like that. He was ambitious, wanted to do something, with many ideas in his head ...

But here he has nothing of all that. If he would find a work in his profession, he would feel different. He feels declassed, undervalued. I think he has lost self-confidence. (IP7: French-Algerian woman grown up in France, 27 years old, family reunification with father as child, sponsored her Algerian husband, university degree, searching employment)

A young Algerian man, who migrated to France to find work, is still in an irregular residence status, but in the process of regularisation after a recent marriage with a French woman. He supported rather well his professional downgrading as a transitional step in his regularisation and integration process. Furthermore his deskilling is compensated by a higher income compared to his former income as a high qualified commercial manager in Algeria. So he aims to pursue his career in his professional domain once he has a residence permit.
Q: You had a better job in Algeria, how do you experience this downgrading?

I try not to think too much about it. But on the other hand I earn more here than I did as head of business before. In Algeria I had the house, the income, a car, a good life. The parents and family.

Here I have my wife, I have an employment, and I have a good income, for me.

I am not satisfied, I will try to progress in my life, I do not want to be security guard my whole life. I try to find a work in my former profession (business diploma). I look for a job as commercial assistant.

I tried before to find such a job, without success.

I do not believe that I was discriminated, do not know why, maybe there were too much candidates, I did not know much about it, when I just arrived. I was not very well supported, but on the contrary I was well supported in the domain of security professions. By my friend (from childhood in Algeria), who worked there and had experience. I will start to search when I get the papers, then a new chapter will begin. (IP9: Algerian man, 30 years old, independent migrant, in irregular status for 3 and 1/2 years, regularisation after marriage with French-Moroccan woman, security guard)

5.2 Access to social rights and experience of discrimination

What we can see throughout the interviews is that the access to social rights (including school education), despite actual discriminations, was often evaluated as very positive.

This might seem contradictory at first sight, but it explains very well the dilemma between ideal of equality (in the public discourse on civic rights) and de facto discrimination of immigrants (workers) as a social group. Although most interviewees said to have not experienced personal direct racist discrimination, they however often mentioned that the legal and institutional discrimination, and also the stigmatisation of immigrants in public and political discourse was an issue for those living in the banlieues.

In the area of employment, interviewees considered the legal discrimination as foreign nationals in access to public sector employments often as a major disadvantage faced and as unequal treatment, since the public employment sector generally offers better and more secure employment conditions. Many mentioned this as an important motive for acquiring French citizenship with view to improve their employment opportunities (see above).

A woman from Ethiopia (Interview 6) considers herself as de facto French citizen who has a “right to equal rights”, despite the fact she is not yet naturalized. In her view, social rights are acquired through work in France and her equal rights as citizen are rooted in the fact of having a French family, a husband and children with French citizenship.

Q: Do you think that you had all the rights that you should have, social security, benefits, education, housing, all that, did you have access to these rights or not?

I have the rights. I am a French citizen, my children are French, I have a right on all that.

Although I am still foreigner, but I have the rights as a citizen, as a worker in France. I have the rights on all that.

Q: Is there a difference in treatment of French and foreigners?

Yes, the law says. I looked at it, it says you come to work, but you do not have any right.

But in reality you live it, you pay your contributions (social security).

If you are not French you do not have the right, but when you come to France you have all the rights, if you are mother of French children, you have the rights. If your children are born here, you are spouse (of a French), you have the rights. (IP6: Ethiopian woman, ca. 40 years old, sponsored by French husband, cleaner)

This is in contrast to her experience of discrimination in practice, related to her foreigner status and her skin colour, above all in access to public employment or to housing.
Q: Did you have all rights, what did you miss?
One day I found work, I wanted to work, I demanded at the crèche but they did not accept, refused.
Q: Because you were foreigner?
I don’t know, maybe yes. And if you look for work, they ask you if you are French. Once I wanted to work as cleaner in a college (public school), but they demanded the French citizenship. They told me that I needed the citizenship for this employment.
I also applied for work placements, but they also demanded citizenship. For having the payment for the training you had to be citizen.
I work, but without having the (French) nationality that poses problems, if you want to work in the public administration they demand the citizenship, that is a problem. That is a problem for work, for contact, that is a problem everywhere.
Q: Why a problem for contact?
If you are black it is not the same as when you are white. It is also that.
Q: Is it racism you are facing?
Very much here. I cannot say that here exists racism, but I can say that there are differences, because of colour of skin. That is not because of capacities, they do not look at your competences, they look at your skin. That really grieves me. I am really sad for the people, because for knowing they have to try out, they have to give them work, they have to give them the possibility (means). … Not everybody has the same chance.
Q: Give me some examples.
With housing, if you look for an apartment. (IP6: Ethiopian woman, ca. 40 years old, sponsored by French husband, cleaner)

A naturalized immigrant woman of Moroccan origin who came to France in the 1980s is convinced that foreigners and naturalized immigrants are disadvantaged as well in the access to social housing or employment. This is related to her perception of a general worsening of living conditions in her suburb, especially concerned youth unemployment.

Then (in the 1980s) the suburb was different, now life here it is too hard. For the youth, for everyone, it is too hard.

Before there was accommodation. Now you demand an apartment and they do not give it to you.
Q: Is it racism?
I would nearly say that. They do not give it to foreigners, I can tell you frankly. We pay our rent, everything, it is obligatory that we pay our rent, we don’t want to live for free, also at our home it is not for free. But it is necessary that … with crisis of housing, they do not give apartments, that is not normal.

There were young people, respect, there was much respect, if you walked with your shopping, they helped you to carry. But now there is not much respect any more, the youth is fed up. Really, I tell you the truth, they are fed up. Because if they leave school, send a CV for work, they do not give them work.

My niece is a nurse, she did internship, but she is now at home, she does not find an employer although she made school for nurses. It is difficult for the young people. (IP14/2: French-Moroccan woman, ca. 55 years old, reunited with Moroccan husband, cleaner)

Migrants in irregular status have very limited access to social rights. However, access to minimum health care and to public kindergarten and school for children was possible irrespective of irregular status of a parent.

My grandmother, she was Sans Papiers until her death. But nevertheless she got medical treatment in hospital. Because she was ill, and my father was unemployed for several years. So he did not have much means to pay for that… Concerning all that France is really not bad, social security, benefits, that has helped us very much. To get medical treatment without
thinking about it very much. (IP7: French-Algerian woman grown up in France, 27 years old, family reunification with father as child, sponsored her Algerian husband, university degree, searching employment)

Migrants in an irregular status with children are excluded from child benefits. In case of irregular employment they also have to bear the risks for health care and work accidents, but also unemployment (in case of licensing) themselves. In that respect, the regularisation improved access to social rights and working conditions for the persons interviewed.

5.3 Housing conditions

For several of our interview partners’ access to affordable housing and bad housing conditions were a major difficulty. For immigrant families with more children access to cheaper social housing (HLM)\(^{31}\) in the suburbs is the only way to get by. Social housing can become also a “trap” for migrant families that are segregated in poorer housing residences (Cités) or suburbs. Many have to remain for economic reasons in these suburban neighbourhoods where immigrants and their descendants are concentrated.

Two examples highlight the problems that some immigrants have experienced in this respect.

The Ethiopian woman who came to France with her French husband and their child: After her arrival the family lived in a very small one room apartment. After one year they found a bigger, but more expensive apartment (600 € rent) in the private housing market in the suburbs of Paris. Her husband working as a cook earned only the SMIC (1000 €), thus she had to take up work as a cleaner to cope with financial difficulties. She gave birth to three children and found it hard to reconcile work and child care.

She experienced the housing and living standards as very bad, also compared to her living conditions before her emigration (origin from a wealthy family) where she lived with her family (that had fled war in Ethiopia) in Djibouti. She was horrified by the bad housing conditions:

Now I saved to buy a little house of my own, because I was sick of paying rents of 750 €, and in addition you don’t have any resources. At 10 you want to put your children to bed, but the apartment trembles, the people cry like animals, it is very noisy. There was much noise in the apartment where we lived, the people all the time had quarrels. There were many with babies, a dirty staircase, I said to myself this is not possible. Now it is okay, I am used to it, but at the beginning I could not bear. I thought that it is not possible that people can live like that. It was disgusting, horrible. Everywhere garbage. It is not like that at my home. There people pay attention. Alcohol, sexuality, all that you do not talk to children, one talks about, but not impolite words, one hides such things from children. But it was not like that here. I would have liked to return back home, but my husband said it is like that everywhere, it is not that worse. Anyway we did not have a choice. (IP6: Ethiopian woman, ca. 40 years old, sponsored by French husband, cleaner)

During her first time in France she experienced a considerable degradation of quality of living, to which she could not easily adapt. She also suffered from the poor social life and a lack of solidarity in her neighbourhood.

Now I live well (here in France), now I know people, now I live well. But before, some 5, 6 years ago, I could not say to other people in my country “come here”. Because in France you earn money, but you don’t live. That is what you also have to know. If you have the money, that permits you to buy some things, what you want, all right, but you do not have a comfortable life. But I talk of a state of mind (esprit), because always you are stressed, mentally you do not feel well. You do not sleep well, you do not eat well, you do not amuse yourself. You always have fear. I don’t know why. I talk of what I know./…/

\(^{31}\) Social housing blocks are termed HLM (habitation à loyer modéré – accommodation with moderate rent)
There are people who live better than I do. I am never satisfied, there is not enough love here. At my home people it comes really from their heart. But here sharing is only words, it is not cordial here.

It something happens to you, you are ill or depressed, you cannot count on anybody.

Q: You feel alone here?

Yes. I feel very lonely. (IP6: Ethiopian woman, ca. 40 years old, sponsored by French husband, cleaner)

Another example is an Algerian immigrant family who raised 8 children in a HLM in the suburbs. The woman came to join her husband at the end of the 1970s with four children and faced particularly difficult housing conditions then. First they lived for 7 months in a single room with kitchen, then they moved to a 3 room apartment in the suburb (Seine St. Denis) with five children at that time. When their sixth child was born they obtained with some difficulty a social housing apartment (5 rooms) in a HLM. A part of the family still lives there today: the 63 year old woman who recently separated from her violent husband with three of her adult children. After the divorce from her husband she has difficulties to pay the rent of the apartment (700 €), she only receives a little pension (from her working life as cleaner). The children living with her are unemployed or in unstable work.

Today she also wants to move to a more quiet and secure neighbourhood, because in the neighbourhood where she lived for 28 years “there’s always much trouble, fights, and people killed, too much violence in the neighbourhood” (IP16: Algerian woman, 63 years old, reunited with her Algerian husband 30 years ago, pensioner and part time cleaner).

5.4 Perception of social mobility

In the light of the very heterogeneous trajectories most migrants interviewed had a very differentiated perception of their social mobility through migration, the benefits and the loss. The assessment of positive and negative outcomes of immigration depended on the development of familial life, their job career and satisfaction in working life or their income and socio-economic living standard.

Though, in some respects, the family migration project implied a downgrading of their former social and professional position. They had to give up a better life in their countries of origin (also when coming from developing countries). This concerned above all their housing conditions, their working conditions (as unskilled workers in France) and professional careers that were disrupted. Therefore, despite the familial motives of migration, they also expected a social advancement through migration, especially those coming from poorer countries and regions.

For others, above all for those that came as children, the migration constituted a benefit, in terms of educational opportunities that they did not have in their countries of origin.

A Bulgarian former university sports professor considers his career as “finished” since he is not able to find a comparable high position in France. This leaves him dissatisfied with his professional career possibilities and development in France.

For me it is not hard mentally, but it is hard with regard to my profession. That means, my career is finished. It is finished.

Q: It is a big sacrifice.

Yes, with regard to my professional life I am a little bit disappointed. Normally I could have made my doctoral degree. You can evolve in University life. I was co-director of the board at University. After doctoral degree you become university lecturer, professor, that is university life. When I return to Bulgaria, two, three times a year, I see my friends who made this career. And I am nothing. Before I left, I was in a more advanced position than they were. It was not an economic degradation, because concerning the money I am better off than they are. But professionally I am not satisfied. (IP5: Bulgarian man, 49 years old, accompanying spouse of Bulgarian high skilled professional, sports professor working as part-time athletic trainer)
Despite his blocked career due to emigration and his professional downgrading in France, the family migration project depending on his wife’s career advancement abroad was for him and the family as a whole a benefit in terms of income and living standards. In his opinion, his son “benefited 150%” from the international education (in Moscow, Paris) learning five languages. His professional downgrading in France was counterbalanced by a high level income (of his wife) and good living standards in France, also less difficult to support due to the temporary and not definitive character of their immigration in France. Thus the economic benefits still outweigh compared to a “missed” career in the university sector in Bulgaria.

A French-Malian woman (Interview 11) from middle class, urban social background, who did not experience deskilling, has integrated well from a professional perspective and is satisfied with her work as a social mediator. However, she does not consider her migration as a “success story”. She believes that her career possibilities in Mali would have been better than in France.

I am from Bamako. For me, being here is an accident of life. I did not want to immigrate here to France all alone, my family is not a migrant family, although many brothers and sisters came here, but have returned (after studies) to Mali.

My life would be better (in Mali) than here in France. When I compare my situation with that of my former school colleagues in Mali, who now all occupy very high responsibility occupations. They are bank directors, entrepreneurs (that have created their own enterprise), persons that have really a good situation. /…/

This less concerns my work, I like my work very much. But concerning the social position, they are more successful compared to me. They are also financially better off, because here in the consumption society, everything I earn is spent.

Q: So you feel worse off than them, a little bit a shame for you?

Yes, migration was no success for me. I think that it is the same for many people. In my situation as an immigrant woman, I cannot complain in comparison to other poor girls, who are married at 13 years, who came here and have only suffered. (IP11: French woman of Malian origin, 35 years old, sponsored by Malian political refugee, social mediator)

This rather negative view of her emigration also relates to her separation from her husband, and the wish to return to Mali, where she still maintains very close familial relations and supports her parents with regular remittances.

An immigrant woman from Hong-Kong, who has been living in couple with her French spouse for 7 years in France and succeeded well to integrate in professional life, has benefited in other terms from her migration. Their good income and housing situation, and a life as childless couple enabled self-realisation and an independent (cosmopolitan) life style. She benefited from emigration in several ways, despite decreased economic career chances:

I do not feel having sacrificed that much, because I won as well by coming to France.

I won a family, a relationship of love, and also concerning life in France, life in Paris, that is most convenient to me. Because Paris is the best city in the world, that suits me most. There is a very strong artistic culture, intercultural, lively cultural scene (to go out).

I can travel easily to Hong-Kong, to other European countries. We have many Chinese, French friends.

Q: How do you see your experience?

It was rich, I do not regret at all. (Q: Even if you are poorer than before?) About money, I do not care. Now when I come to Hong-Kong I am among the poorest of my friends, but I am happy, because for me money is relatively less important. At social level I feel better to live in France. The quality of life in Paris is better than in Hong-Kong. Cultural life is better, very rich. I could see many new things in Europe and Africa. In Hong-Kong people are always working, studying. Life there for me is boring. (IP1: French-Chinese woman from Hong-Kong, 44 years old, sponsored by her French husband, social worker)

However, in terms of benefits and advancement, two important issues were put forward by several interviewees: The first concerned social security, the second education for children.
Migrant families originating from poorer socio-economic class in their home countries, who also continue to live in poorer living standards, valued above all the general rise of social and economic living standards (compared to their home country) as a benefit, especially concerning the education system and social security.

A woman from Morocco (Interview 12) considers the situation with regard to social security much better in France:

My husband wanted to come to France, he did not like to stay in Morocco. I told him when I married him, that I would not live in Morocco. Normally it would be like that. But it would be hard for me, there is no work, my son is with me (in France). Work there is hard.

Q: For women it is hard in Morocco?

For woman and men equally. For those who are rich it is good in Morocco, but for the others it is hard. If you get sick there, you do not have a hospital. If you do not have money, at the hospital they do not give you medical treatment.

Q: It is hard, you don’t like to live there.

No, I will not stay there, I will stay here in France (!).

Normally it is good here, you find a house, you have a work. When you don’t have work, they give you RMI (unemployment benefits). I live in a HLM social housing. You do not have the same in Morocco. Here you have hospital for medical treatment, if you do not earn well there is social security.

Q: Is it better to be in France, or in Morocco?

It is better here in France. It is better for the children to go to school. Better when you get ill, for the doctor. It is not the same. My husband also, he does not want to return. He finds everything is better here. (IP12: Moroccan woman, 37 years old, reunited with her first Moroccan husband of whom divorced, sponsored her second Moroccan husband, cleaner)

Social mobility: a generational perspective

Migrant workers families who immigrated and settled during the 1970s and 1980s could sometimes achieve a social upward mobility, especially for their children (university diploma, higher qualified professions). Against the background of economic crisis (rising unemployment, insecure jobs), increasing inflation and housing costs, several of the interviewed immigrant families are experiencing an increased poverty risk or a decline of their living standards.

Older immigrant parents and second generation alike agreed about the gains from immigration in terms of their children’s education. Migrants from different social classes, origin and age (immigrant generation) affirmed and positively valued the idea of a benefit for their children.

Q: Didn’t you win because of being in France, is that not also a social advancement compared to those in Mali, isn’t that a plus that compensates?

Yes, not for me but for the children. I was coming in the context of family reunification, not for pleasure. But if my children succeed well in their studies here, that would be a plus for me. If they integrate as good citizens, that would be a plus for me. (IP11: French woman of Malian origin, 35 years old, sponsored by Malian political refugee, social mediator)

In that sense several immigrant women expressed their expectation that migration will payoff for their children in the future.
6 Family life and its transformations in the migration context

Family life in the migration context in France often underwent major changes, affecting roles of men and women, couple relations, child care arrangements, parent-child relations or the socialisation of children. Women from the older generation and also from the second generation experienced these role changes as fairly positive, depending on their social background before emigration.

This related to the increase in economic independence due to their work income in France, but also to socio-cultural role changes taking place within families in France. The latter was very much felt by the older generation of immigrant women who came from rural areas, where they lived in larger family and kin structures that constrained their individual freedom and decision making. Thus, many saw their immigration to France in some respect as a "liberation" from social control or more patriarchal family structures, where they were confined to subordinate roles. In that sense, several, especially from the second generation who had grown up in France, valued the liberties and equal rights as women in France.

6.1 Changing gender roles and couple relations

The change of the familial surrounding, disconnection from larger family and thus also the lesser familial control – related to a change of family life in the “nuclear family” – was experienced by several women as positive as they became more independent and could liberate from constraints imposed on them in their emigration context. It enabled also the development of new role models of family life, including different couple relations.

For a French-Algerian woman returning with her family from Algeria to France it was a positive experience, as they gained independence:

“What has changed compared to Algeria, we were in the family cocoon. Lived at my parents-in-law, we had a good relation, could do what we wanted, go out.

In France my husband was from one day to the other detached, he found himself “alone”: only husband, wife and children. That is completely different. It was more freedom, and then he takes more things into his hands. But I had more choice, more things to do. It was a positive thing. More independence. (IP17: French-Algerian women born in France, 40 years old, sponsor for her Algerian husband, domestic help)

A Malian woman who joined her Malian husband in France (and later divorced him) thinks that she could live a more liberal couple relation than in Mali and also had more decision making power concerning separation from him:

Q: Are there differences between life with your husband in Mali and in France? To what extent has migration changed the relationship with your husband? Do you live like you have before?

Yes. Not many changes, only with respect to family that is around you in Mali. Which would have constrained a little bit the liberty that I could have with my husband.

Q: Is in fact better to be together only as a couple?

Yes. Better./.../

I divorced from my husband, it was my wish (demand). Not all (migrant women) have the chance to do that. That would not have been possible in Mali. (IP11: French woman of Malian origin, 35 years old, sponsored by Malian political refugee, social mediator)

Also a young Algerian man, married to a French woman of Moroccan origin in France, appreciated that he could live a more liberal couple relation with his wife, than he could have in Algeria.

Q: Same relation as couple when you had lived in Algeria?

No, don't think so. In Algeria or in Morocco we could not have lived together before marriage. That is something very French. That was luck for me. Because I always wanted first to live
together with a woman, before marrying her. I already wanted this in Algeria. Live in partnership before marriage. (IP9: Algerian man, 30 years old, independent migrant, in irregular status for 3 and 1/2 years, regularisation after marriage with French-Moroccan woman, security guard)

Others reported that patriarchal control by husbands had relaxed and they gained more decision making power and economic independence with their work in France. A 52 year old Algerian woman, who 21 years ago joined her Algerian husband (Interview 15), whom she had married at the age of 16 through an arranged marriage within the family, always had a good relation with her husband. In earlier times he controlled her more, but that has changed. Over time, couple relations became more egalitarian, which also resulted from her growing economic independence when she started to work.

Q: Do you think being in France, has changed something with view to liberties for women?
Now, yes. But there was no liberty for us in Algeria before.

There was more liberty in France, but now also in Algeria. It has also changed. Before women did not go to the market, there was no market. Only men. Now it is for everyone, the same thing here and in Algeria.

I have more freedom as a woman now. When I was younger I had to tell my husband where I go, even when I went to the doctor with children. But today this has changed. Today I decide myself where I want to go, leave when and where I want, he does not know, and does not look for me. Before this was not possible, but now it has changed. (IP15: Algerian woman, 52 years old, reunited with her Algerian husband 21 years ago, sponsor for her oldest son, child carer)

A Malian woman reported that her relation with her spouse improved because he renounced violence against her in France. Whereas in Mali it was "normal" and socially tolerated, in France he stopped beating her, as she supposes also because he did not want to endanger his residence permit.

Q: Is life different with husband in Mali and here? What kind of difference?
Yes, very different. In Africa he was violent, he always beat me. When we discussed, he beat me. Here in France he stopped with that. Why, I don’t know. Maybe because you do not do it here. In France you do not beat women.

Q: He is frightened?
Of course he is frightened. We have disputes all the time, but he never beat me since we are in France. If he would beat me I would address the social worker/assistant. I would do that.

In Mali it was normal, they said it did not matter.

Q: So you have more liberties here than in Mali? You prefer to be here?
Yes. I prefer, I like to live here. But with all my children /…/ Now my husband is nice to me, more than in Mali. (IP3: Malian woman, ca. 38 years old, joined her Malian husband, regularised after 6 years of irregular stay, cleaner)

On the other hand, the loss of the social net can also mean a weakening of protective mechanisms and support by other family members in the case of domestic violence. The change of roles in family life can be accompanied by ruptures or violent conflicts, as well between spouses as between parents and children.

**Women’s rights, gender equality**

Several of the interviewed female partners asserted that they could live and realize more equal partnership relations and obtained a broader scope for individual choice and decision making power in France. This is, to a large extent, a generational issue, related to general societal transformation of gender relations that also has taken place in the countries of origin since their emigration.

I came from a very traditionalist, conservative, very authoritarian culture. What I discovered in France, the French culture that is more open, where you have more liberty, more choice,
where there is more respect for the opinions of others, and above all of women. Something that did not exist in Turkey, but that currently changes.

Q: So you adopted the French ideal of equality of women?

No, just to be treated as a person, human being. Because there was much discrimination against women in my (Turkish immigrant) community, I was really a feminist, and revolted against it. Because nothing explains that, also not the religion. You cannot use the Muslim religion for everything as scape-goat, that is not only in the Muslim religion, the same in other religions. I refused Turkish culture, I was fed up with it. Because I only experienced the bad customs, I was all my life forced to behave like that, go to Mosque, learn Koran, I was forced to veil. It was not out of free will, but I was obliged to do so. For me, coming to France was a real liberation. I think that my father never did anything better for us. (IP8/1: French-Turkish woman grown up in France, 35 years old, family reunification with father as child, commercial employee)

A young Moroccan woman recently joining her husband in France noticed no difference to France, in Morocco women have also gained equal rights and access to employment.

Q: One says in France women are more free, what do you think?

IP1: Also at home it is the same.

IP2: Now in Morocco it is more than here. At present in Morocco there are women’s rights, there is freedom. They are not beaten by their husbands. With the King Mohamed VI everything has changed. It is good there.

IP1: Now in Morocco the women work. Women have more rights now, but it is the same here and in Morocco. (IP14/1: Moroccan women, 25 years old, sponsored by French husband of Moroccan origin grown up in France, part time cleaner - IP14/2 (Mother-in-law): French-Moroccan woman, ca. 55 years old, reunited with Moroccan husband, cleaner)

The generation of mothers had less autonomy (also concerning marriage and migration decisions) than their daughters. This is also true for the decision making concerning marriage partners that has been more individualized and withdrawn from parental and familial decision making (“arranged marriages” by parents as was the case of several Algerian, Moroccan or Malian first generation women interviewed).

Those of the younger second generation generally estimated that they had been raised in French society and had equal rights and opportunities as women, compared to the situation of their mothers. They considered that their mothers had not had the same chance to emancipate (also due to their low level of education), or to separate from husbands in case of domestic violence. In the two cases of domestic violence, strong ties of solidarity developed among daughters and mothers in defence against the father’s violence.

The question of gender equality and women’s independence reappeared in relation to partnerships between second generation French women who married partners from the country of origin. In the opinion of a 40 year old second generation French-Algerian woman (Interview 17), who lived for ten years with her husband in Algeria, such partnerships can be a problem due to different socialisation:

It is different if a boy/man who has a stable life here, marries and brings a wife from Algeria, if he supports his family, if he is a “hard worker”, he works, it is no problem.

But it is different thing for a girl who marries and brings a man from Algeria. Often you see in that case that the man from Algeria wants to have everything. It is him who wants to hold the reins in his hands. They will behave in a more authoritarian way, they want to command and the woman has to do everything.

But a couple from here, two immigrants with French citizenship, they will agree well on that. They are not hypocrites. If it does not go well between them, the relationship will break up, everyone will go their own way.

But with a husband from Algeria it is not the same, it is not the same mentality.

Q: There is a power relation, the man wants to control?
Yes. I did not have this problem with my husband. Maybe the younger generation is different because of their education. (IP17: French-Algerian women born in France, 40 years old, sponsor for her Algerian husband, domestic help)

Reversed gender roles

In some cases former roles and gendered division of work were reversed in the context of migration. One example is a French-Algerian woman and her Algerian husband.

She had to take more responsibility in France, as she was familiar with life in France because she was born and had grown up in France. So she managed all the administrative and organisational matters, communication with authorities. On the contrary, his status as a foreigner in France made him more dependent on her and their roles were reversed.

Now in France it is mainly me who is in charge of everything with children, I take all the responsibility. Here it is more the woman that plays this role. The relationship between man and woman has changed. Because in Algeria it was my husband who was in charge of everything.

I can easily make friends (communicate with people), but my husband is a little bit timid, he retreats. So if there are administrative documents to demand, he tells me to go there, because I can do it better. He feels as a foreigner. He is less at ease. I am frankly talking with everyone. (IP17: French-Algerian women born in France, 40 years old, sponsor for her Algerian husband, domestic help)

Men also slip into a more dependant position in relation to their sponsoring wife in case of unemployment, when they depend on the income of women.

So, for example, in the case of a young French-Algerian couple (Interview 7), where the woman, a second generation of Algerian origin, sponsored her Algerian husband:

In the beginning he was dependant on me, in our home country the boys have their pride, they work and bring home the money, they decide everything. When he arrived here, he was in my sphere of living, it was my apartment, I already had everything furnished, the apartment was on my name, the electricity on my name, everything was on my name. He practically did not exist. He did not work in the first period, so it was my money we lived on. He did not dare to demand me for money. There are many difficult things like this for him that I did not see, not recognize. More and more he let things out in discussions with me, so that I began to understand.

When I realized (about money), I gave him my credit card. In giving him the card I wanted to revalue him a little bit more.

Now he works, he has his bank account, his credit card. He is independent. His bank account is also our common bank account. I still kept my bank account. In the beginning I paid everything, because I had work. Now he works and he earns even a little bit more than I do. He often pays when we go out.

Very quickly he began to deal with all the administrative things (for papers) by himself (because I had no time when I worked). In one month he knew Paris better than me. I encouraged him to go out, discover the city, because Paris is a nice city, walk around by foot and thus he very quickly adapted.

Social relations as well: he went out with friends and my brother. He conquered his space.

When he arrived I introduced him to my friends, family members. Then I tried to establish something around the two of us. On my initiative. (IP7: French-Algerian woman grown up in France, 27 years old, family reunification with father as child, sponsored her Algerian husband, university degree, searching employment)

Another example is that of the Bulgarian man (Interview 5) who accompanied his wife, who is the bread winner of the family; whereas he now assumes more the role of supporting the professional career of his wife. Roles have reversed, as he became financially dependant on his wife after migration to France. He perceives his role also to provide and support the
necessary conditions for his wife to succeed in her job, by organising daily life. However, for him this does not mean a questioning of his role as head of the family.

Q: How did your relations with your wife change?

I think the relations did not change. I do not do more housework here than before, we have a domestic help. But I can do the housework as well. That is no problem for me, because I am a man, that does not disturb me.

Q: Do you mind that your wife earns more than you?

No, I do not mind. Because we are a team. Because life abroad is much tougher than at home. Before in Sofia I earned more money, now that has changed. I say that we are a team, because she works enormously. Because for a foreigner, to be in a position in a foreign country, you have to work 2-3 times more, to prove yourself.

For doing this job you have to be calm and feel confident. She always can feel confident that I take care of our son, that I go shopping, etc. I am occupied more with our son, with shopping (than my wife). That is a habit we have since long time, since we married. But I am the boss, because it is me who decides. No it is not exactly like that, we take the decisions together. But if we need more information for a decision to take, it is me that gathers information. I am freer to do it. For example if we go on holidays I compare prices, reservations, I gather all information, then we discuss about it, and then make a decision. That works for all things in life... (IP5: Bulgarian man, 49 years old, accompanying spouse of Bulgarian high skilled professional, sports professor working as part-time athletic trainer)

Their family life is also severely constrained by her employment conditions (long working hours, frequent business travels) and due to his part time job in the evening. So the time spent together is rather rare, but the higher income liberates them from housework.

The change of roles and power relations in the migration situation can on the contrary also create and reinforce stronger dependencies in couple relations, for example place women in a more dependant relation to their husbands (than they would be in the home country familial context) and men to assume more authoritarian roles, as heads of families, than they had in the societies of origin.

In the view of a Malian immigrant woman who works as a social and cultural mediator with immigrants, the change of familial structures in the migration context leads to conflicts due to changing relation of men and women, as she describes for the case of Malian families:

Migration is no success for many migrants. Above all women, they suffer much. For example, the husband who is violent, even if not physically, he often morally oppresses his wife. More dependence from husband.

She does not speak the language, feels alien in a new environment, they fear of what others back in Mali will say.

In Mali men cannot behave, like they can do here. There is no social control. In Africa he is not the chief of family, here he finds himself in this position, he is the most powerful as father and family head. But in Africa you can be husband, but at same time not head of family, which is the father of the family. The father of all children, who cares for the children, that they eat well, who can punish them without control. So there a father of 10 children does not have the role of family head, but his father or a brother (that is the family head).

Men here in France have a problem with assuming that role of family head. They also have personal difficulties with that and say that they are victims of this situation.

Men sometimes blames life in France, the social assistant, or that women defend themselves more, when the relationships with their wives break up. They do not manage to fit in the system... They import something, polygamy here to France, but do not manage to control it or to live it in a good way.

Q: So men think that women have more freedom here, they defend themselves more here?

Yes. But I think that is not true. That is their discourse.

Q: Why do women have to suffer more here?
Because in the beginning they remain isolated, they came very young, have one, two, three, four children, have not at all the capacities for giving them good education. They have problems to raise the children. The result is the failure of our children at school, socially, that is very difficult. (IP11: French woman of Malian origin, 35 years old, sponsored by Malian political refugee, social mediator)

For other migrant women, gender roles and couple relations did not change that much after immigration to France, like is the case of the woman from Hong-Kong (Interview 1) who married a French man. Her socio-cultural background – she came from a “very capitalist society” and an urban, middle class setting in Hong-Kong – did not differ much from the social milieu in France which she integrated (also middle income class). She already led an economically independent life as a single working woman in Hong-Kong.

6.2 Work – family life balance

Gender relations in the family changed in the migration context mostly out of necessity to adapt to economic and social conditions. So the reorganisation of family life is subordinate to new conditions of working, a necessary reorganisation of housework and parental care for children. Women in most cases had to assume the double role as housewives, mothers and workers.

For those who came as privileged migrants (in better economic or social status) the division of housework and budget in partnerships was not a major problem: for example the Bulgarian family who could afford a domestic worker to do the housework.

An Ethiopian woman and her French husband, who married and first lived together in Djibouti where the husband worked for longer time (Interview 6), gives an example of the redistribution of housework in a different context: The woman came from a wealthy family and lived well before emigrating to France. The organisation of domestic and child care work in France changed due to the economic and social living conditions. When they lived in a common household (together with her family) in Djibouti housework was no issue for them as they had housemaids. In France they had to reorganise and she got her husband to do some of the housework.

Yes, we live well. We had many difficulties. But we decided to come here, we had to change our way of living here, we share our work in household and education of the children. And we organise our life ourselves. The division of housework was hard in the beginning, because my husband and I too had never done the housework.

One day I forced my husband to do some of the housework, I had enough of doing everything. I told him, otherwise I would leave him. So he did some work, cooking, looking after children. And now he is doing more than I do. (IP6: Ethiopian woman, ca. 40 years old, sponsored by French husband, cleaner)

Conditions for combining child care and work

The working conditions and low income jobs that force immigrants to accumulate working hours and several jobs impact on family life.

Women in the interview sample, who worked in precarious jobs (no stable contract, part time jobs) with low income (SMIC) and unfavourable working conditions (cleaning), faced difficulties in reconciling their work and family life; above all, when low income forced them to multiply jobs (with different employers and workplaces) and with the long working days (from early in the morning until late in the evening, including long itineraries to workplace).

These interviewees had to rely besides the public child care also on other family members and their partners for assistance with child care.

Generally, access to public childcare was no problem for the interviewees. They found a place for their children in the public crèche (at an early age) as it is common for families in France. In general, the French familial and child care policy promotes facilities that enable
women to return to work at a very early age of children. Also children of parents in an irregular situation had access to the public kindergarten (as in the case of the Chinese woman in an irregular situation, Interview 13). However, the sometimes long waiting periods for getting a place in the public crèche (e.g. one year in the case of a young Moroccan mother) constrain the employment possibilities of women.

**Children’s education**

In the context of difficult social conditions for the upbringing and education of children that some families faced, which was in particular a concern of women living in the poorer suburbs and HLM, several (working) mothers emphasized the role of parental supervision and assistance for their children (help with homework, etc.). In this respect school success and preventing them from getting into “troubles” was a major concern for them. An Ethiopian mother of four children living in the suburbs also pointed to the difficulties of raising children in the poor suburban neighbourhoods, and her efforts to educate them well:

> Our children are born here, if we take them back to my country, they will say they are French, because they are born here. They are originating from my family but they are French.

> I do not agree that our children destroy things, that they are impolite, that they are badly educated, all what I hear at school. With all that I do not agree. Because when you go to school you have to respect your teacher. That is our future (our children). And the parents also have to pay attention to the children, look after their homework, eat together with the children.

> As a mother I am not happy with all that. There is no social life here, for having social life you have to be courageous to live such a life. Because growing up in the banlieue, living a life like this, you need strength. Your children will learn other things in school, from other homes, on the streets. My children are not on the streets, I resist. And it works well, I hope so. (IP6: Ethiopian woman, ca. 40 years old, sponsored by French husband, cleaner)

In a similar vein mothers often conceived their own migration project closely associated to a project for their children’s future and social advancement: Some of the mothers interviewed had the idea that above all their migration serves to give children more opportunities than they would have in the countries of origin. The *jus soli* and *de facto* citizenship integration of their children born in France connect them to France and makes their immigration irreversible.

### 6.3 Legal status and power relations

Legal status also shapes relations among family members as it influences power relations: a more secure legal status conferring rights makes migrants less dependant on the sponsoring family members. Legal position and rights can thus also be mobilised within such relations in order to exercise pressure on family members. As we saw in our examples of female sponsors (second generation) their better legal status and social integration (broader social networks, knowledge of language, institutions) also gave them autonomy within a partnership.

The situation of women with children born in France or who are French citizens by birth (via French father) provides them with a rather strong legal position in terms of residence rights and citizenship.\(^{32}\)

To the extent that the legal framework establishes status-related dependence among those in a weak legal position (precarious temporary, dependant family member, irregular status) and in a stronger legal position (permanent resident, citizen) it also shapes gender and parent-child relations. This legal dependence may also lead partners in a more weak position to tolerate bad treatment and abusive relationships.

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\(^{32}\) Two of our female interview partners (Interview 3, 13) had their residence status regularised on the basis of their children born and raised in France.
A case where legal status dependence from a marriage partner also involved bad treatment was the one of a Chinese immigrant woman married to a French lawyer. Soon after her marriage the relationship changed for the worse and her husband began to treat her badly. She found herself in a legal and economic dependence from him, she was doing all the housework for him and he gave her money, although using this as a means of pressure on her. The most important reason to bear the more and more unbearable relationship with her husband was to secure the residence permit for her daughter, who she brought to France. Out of fear of losing her and her daughter’s residence permits, which depended on the couple relation with him, she did not leave him or divorce him, because she had no right to obtain an independent residence status.

I do not want to die with him, I know that I will die when I stay with him. But I cannot divorce because of the papers. I stay with him, above all I do it for my daughter, I have to wait, because she is not yet 18. At the age of 18, then my daughter will have a permit. It is not for myself, I do not care for my papers!

I cried much, each day. He psychologically wears me down all the time. It takes me all the courage. With him I always feel like a useless woman. That I am incapable of doing something, I could not find a normal work until now. He always tells me that I cannot speak French well. Here I cannot lead a normal life.

If I would leave him I would immediately loose my residence permit, and how could I then survive with my daughter here? Nobody would help me, nobody defends me.

I cannot ask other people for help because he behaves always normal in front of with other people. Only his family knows it. /…/ In China I would never have accepted that a man treats me like that. But you cannot compare. (IP10: Chinese woman, 45 years old, independent migrant, regularisation of irregular status after marriage with French husband, unemployed)

Her husband also exploited her weak legal position to dominate her and prevent her from separating from him.

He benefits from the foreigners laws, he said to me that I could not divorce him, because I would not have papers. He said that I had not the right to divorce according to French law. You have to marry within 6 months (?), otherwise you cannot divorce. He tells me anything (what he wants).

Q. Do you think that the French law protects you?

No, for me it is impossible. If I had been in China as a wife in such a situation, I would have left him (normally). But I cannot do so here. I do not speak French well, so I cannot find a normal work, for my daughter. I regret having married him. (IP10: Chinese woman, 45 years old, independent migrant, regularisation of irregular status after marriage with French husband, unemployed)

A weak legal position can also foster exploitation and domination in couple and family relations, as for example in the case of a spouse in an irregular status, as their lack of rights makes them dependant on their spouse/family members. As the social mediator and Malian immigrant woman (Interview 11) pointed out, Malian migrant women in an irregular situation can also be exploited in the familial context:

That results in great difficulties of integration, at all levels, at the financial level there are many problems, the women are not allowed to work.

Concerning family situation, a woman in an irregular situation is in a weak situation vis à vis the first wife with residence permit, which is officially recognized, by the state. Sometimes they even find themselves in a situation of modern slavery, they suffer from the husband, from the first wife, they do the cooking, care for the children, she has to do everything (Q: and has absolutely no rights). She has no rights. (IP11: French woman of Malian origin, 35 years old, sponsored by Malian political refugee, social mediator)

Access to protection is not always accessible in practice as several examples of interviewees show. Interviewees expressed the feeling or had the experience that the public (social) institutions cannot help them. This may also be related to the double role of control and
assistance of social authorities, which certainly constitutes a barrier for migrants to address public institutions.

6.4 Generations and child - parent relations

Two family migration biographies over two generations may point also to the transformations of child parent relations and gender roles in the emigration process. They give an insight in the different processes of role change taking place over time.

In the case of an Algerian immigrant family (Interview 7) the woman and three of the five children joined their father, an immigrant worker who stayed in France already since the end of the 1960s, in the 1980s. They came from a rural village in Kabylie, the father left to work in France because he had no claim to inheritance of the land and sought to support his family by way of emigration (to build a house for them). They could not bring the whole family to France and the two (full aged) children stayed in Algeria. One son came later for studies and to live with his family in France. The daughter grown up in France has in the meantime naturalised and finished university studies, described the change of gender and generational roles within her family context as follows:

Q: The relations between your parents changed after coming to France?

Yes. I just got to know my father when I arrived here. It was holiday, everything had to be very correct, we were really educated well, they watched over us very much, where we lived we were the only foreigners, only French lived there.

There were very clear distinct roles: my father worked, earned the money, my mother was at home, housewife, cared for children, for education. But the big decisions were taken by my father.

I think it is different than in Algeria, when I talk with my cousins, I realise that they do not have the same education. Because my parents adapted a little bit to the way of life here, the French culture.

When my mother arrived she was shocked a little bit (an aunt who talked about her adolescent daughter very openly), because the relation between mother and daughter was a little more distant than here in France. But my mother had to change, later we could talk about all the subjects, about boys, love stories. In Algeria I know friends that cannot talk so easily about such subjects. So I could tell my mother when I fell in love with a boy, my relationship to him... there was no taboo. My husband is very jealous of this intimate relationship I have with my parents. We often talk about that, because my husband does not have such a relationship with his parents. Relationship of respect, but not talking about certain subjects. But we talk about everything, even with my father.

As an adolescent girl my father watched over me very much, maybe I would do the same with my daughter of that age. I think it was parental care. He said, “I could not let you go out like that without knowing where you hang around”.

He also watched over the sons in that way. I see no difference how he treated sons and daughters in that respect. In Algeria the society takes this role of guarding/watching. They are controlled more by the others. At home you are very free, but outside not at all. The culture imposes certain rules, and the girls cannot escape from it, even not boys.

Concerning the daughters, my parents also were frightened because of our virginity which was important for my parents. My father did not talk about it with me, but for him it was evident, but my mother stuck to it, for her virginity was a very important thing. (IP7: French-Algerian woman grown up in France, 27 years old, family reunification with father as child, sponsored her Algerian husband, university degree, searching employment)

Role changes concerned also her mother: she worked as child care assistant and thus could develop social contacts and networks, she learned the language and won independence.

My mother learned to read and write in an association here. When she came she did not speak French well. But now she speaks well, has a rich vocabulary, speaks correctly.
In Algeria it would have been impossible for my mother to find work. But here, my father developed his views, he became very open on this. But on the other hand, with other things he remained very traditional. With education, for us children, succeeding in school, for him was the absolute happiness. He always worried about our progress in school. (IP7: French-Algerian woman grown up in France, 27 years old, family reunification with father as child, sponsored her Algerian husband, university degree, searching employment)

When the daughter married her Algerian husband, the parents had reservations about her marriage with a man from their hometown in Algeria:

My parents said that I was the last one to marry someone from our home (town). My father did not say much about, but my mother thinks it is good that I married a Kabyle man, who is nice, a good Kabyle who has studied, that is good. I have always had this in mind (to marry someone from Kabylie).

My parents always thought that I would be with a "foreigner", that is a French man.

And when I passed my holidays in the hometown in Algeria, I met my husband there. And it was love at first sight. It was a summer love, and I did not think that it would go so far. And during my studies I spent several internships in Algeria. And I always passed some time then with him. He asked me to marry him, by sending his mother (to ask). It was a big surprise for me. I accepted, because my parents knew him, he was very nice, very intelligent.

Although they advised me to think very thoroughly about it, because “he is a boy from here (ici: in this context means Algeria) and you are from there (la bas: France), it is not the same mentality”. They always were afraid of that. My parents saw me as “fille de là-bas”, as a girl from France. (IP7: French-Algerian woman grown up in France, 27 years old, family reunification with father as child, sponsored her Algerian husband, university degree, searching employment)

A completely different process of role change developed within a Turkish immigrant family (Interview 8), where the wife and three children joined the father, an immigrant worker in the textile industry in the early 1980s. They came from a poor rural village in Turkey; the emigration of the father was driven by economic reasons as well as familial conflicts. Both parents worked as textile workers in France; the children finished higher education in France. The elder daughter adapted easily in France and succeeded in her studies. She holds a higher diploma in commercial studies (BTS) and works as a commercial employee.

The parents were mainly integrated in the Turkish immigrant community, whereas the children developed social networks in school outside the Turkish community.

When the father wanted to return back to Turkey at the end of the 1980s, the girl and her mother opposed the return project:

In the idea of my father the migration of his family was only temporary, with the aim that his wife supports him as worker to earn enough money to return later to Turkey. Because also at that time the French state promised a return aid (prime) for those immigrants who returned to their country of origin. I don't know if it existed, but it was told in the community.

But he stayed in France, above all because of the children, because I did absolutely not want to return, for me it was out of question. Also mother wanted to stay until the children had grown up.

I told my father that nobody wants us to return there, that they did not love us. That I wanted to study here, I wanted to benefit from all that life here has given us. What should I do there, return to the fields, to the cows and hens.

Also my mother was on my side, because she was relatively well respected as immigrant woman here, she was respected. The only reason why she wanted to return was her family, her parents. Because she missed them terribly. We, the children, were all together with our parents, so we did not miss the relatives in Turkey. But my mother suffered much, during the first three years in France my mother cried all the time. But then she began working with my father (textile worker), and then she was better. On the other side, mother felt happy here, felt in complete ruptured with her life at home. Me and my mother, we experienced that gap between Turkey and France very much. (IP8/1: French-Turkish woman grown up in France, 35 years old, family reunification with father as child, commercial employee)
Their family life was marked by the violence of a conservative and authoritarian father, against his wife and daughters, but the mother never dared to file a complaint against him or divorce. He tried to keep strict patriarchal gender roles and parental control over children, and to prevent (by force) socio-cultural and gender role changes; traditional roles and norms were imposed by force and social control of men over the female family members.

This resulted in the opposition of the elder daughter and violent conflicts. The elder daughter completely broke with the imposed role model: she married a French man against her father’s will, naturalised against his will, and resisted a forced marriage with her cousin in Turkey when she was 22. Her younger sister conformed more to the authority and conservative norms (she married a second generation man of Turkish origin).

For the elder daughter, the education and studies in France offered possibilities to break out from the traditional role and subordination as woman. However, in her view it is not the Turkish or Muslim culture as such, but the conservative culture, gender roles and norms maintained in the immigrant community in France, social norms that had already changed in the country of origin.

Q: How did you experience these Turkish cultural traditions?

Very constraining. Muslim religion by birth. You have to obey your parents, the elder. You should be veiled. Women have to obey their husbands like their fathers before. Respect the traditions, above all religious celebrations. Reply when you are addressed, never discuss, disagree, do what they tell you, not to want to know something, not to learn, study. That is for girls, for the boys it is different. There is unequal treatment of men and women, that was always like that, at home and somewhere else it is the same. This difference is much more stressed among the immigrants in Europe than in Turkish society. That is blatant.

They conserved a “photo” of that state when they left. And they absolutely do not want that the photo develops. So here they (immigrants) refuse to develop.

What extremely shocked me when I returned to Turkey three years later, the evolution among the young girls in Turkey of my age. When I came there to Turkey from Europe I had to wear the traditional dress, the foulard, it was out of question that I dressed European like, whereas the other Turkish girls in my age were styled, put on makeup, ... (IP8/1: French-Turkish woman grown up in France, 35 years old, family reunification with father as child, commercial employee)

Contrary to the Algerian family (above), the father wanted to impose the marriage partner for his daughter. During holidays in Turkey the families arranged a marriage with her cousin and her father forced her with violence.

In the end, the marriage arrangement failed for several reasons: both marriage partners changed their minds after the return of the woman to France and the family reunification procedure; the woman met her French boyfriend and later husband in France; the Turkish husband changed his mind and wanted to stay in Turkey and that she came to Turkey. After one year she initiated the annulment of the marriage in Turkey, which resulted in the rupture of relations with her father and she left home to live in couple with her boyfriend. Her secure status as French citizen also strengthened her position in terms of marriage annulment.

6.5 Transnational family lives

In most of the interview samples some form of transnational family life was established over longer periods of time, and in some cases over generations.

On the one hand, such separations resulted from a choice related to an unstable, temporary migration project, on the other hand these situations were fixed by restrictive family migration policies that prevented reunion with children. Above all, when settled immigrant families faced difficulties in stabilising their economic situation or their immigrant status, the familial ties with the home country remain tight, through regular visits and in particular through regular remittances to support children and parents (who raise the children).
Often the migration process of women entailed leaving behind children during the first period of their emigration process, for example when their migration project was still uncertain. Still, such a process could last for years. However, the project and main preoccupation of immigrant women interviewed was to reunite with their separated children, as they struggled for a common family life in France. The long separations from children were a painful experience for all concerned.

**Support and care for elder parents**

For several interviewees the care of their aged parents of emigrants arose as a more important issue and preoccupation, in relation to sending remittances but also in relation to sponsor their immigration for health care reasons.

Obviously, migrants play an important role with regard to “social insurance” for parents and family members in the home country in case of illness, need for medical treatment and care for elderly family members. As immigrants cannot return to their home countries they often try to bring their family members to France or to send the money for providing medical assistance in the home country. This is mostly the case of migrants coming from developing countries (especially from the poorer rural regions) where social security systems are weakly developed and no medical care is available.

**Sponsoring of other family members**

However, immigrants interviewed faced more constraints to bring in their family members: for a few we heard that visa of family members for care or medical reasons were refused.

An illustrative example in this regard is the Algerian immigrant family (Interview 7), who invited their grandmother to France because she had no more care and assistance of family members in Algeria and needed medical treatment. She was refused an extension of her stay in France with her family, but stayed without residence permit in France (for five years) until her death.

A Turkish immigrant woman reported that her mother-in-law was denied a visa to visit her family in France. She thinks that they denied her visa because they wanted to prevent her from staying (irregularly) in France.

The immigration laws that increasingly transfer “risks” and costs to sponsoring and hosting family members in France (e.g. social security costs; or by tightened sanctions for support of irregular residence) made immigrants in some cases also more reluctant to host and accommodate relatives. So an Algerian woman (Interview 15) refrained from guaranteeing the reception of other family members coming for a visit to France, because of the demand to pay for health insurance costs for family members.

**Q:** If it had been easier for you and your family would you have asked other family members to come to France?

**No.** Before yes, there was no problem. Before for example they did not demand a health insurance, they do now if you apply for family reunification. That means, if someone comes and gets ill, we have to pay everything for him. That is why we do not accept.

**Q:** So you would not like other family members to come?

**Before, yes.** But since two years no more. Because if we make a certificate of accommodation, we have to pay for everything. When something happens to them, we pay everything. They are allowed to come (also with new law), but they demand from us health insurance. We do not do it, because we know people who have many problems with that. (IP15: Algerian woman, 52 years old, reunited with her Algerian husband 21 years ago, sponsor for her oldest son, child carer)

The financial burden to support family members without an employment was also a problem for others, as one French-Algerian woman reported:
Q: The definition of family in law is very limited, would you have liked to bring other family members?

To come for visit yes, but not for all the time. Because the question of finance, with the children and all. Once my brother-in-law arrived, he stayed with me for two years. I had to support him financially, because he had no income, he had nothing. He did not work, because he had no documents. Then, he left the house. He stayed in France, but he left to make his own life. (IP17: French-Algerian women born in France, 40 years old, sponsor for her Algerian husband, domestic help)

### 6.5.1 Importance of remittances

Transnational family life found its expression also in systems of social support via regular remittances from migrants living in France to their family members left behind. The amount, regularity and beneficiaries of remittances sent to family members in the home country vary strongly – depending on the need of family members in the country of origin, the moral obligations, the intensity of familial ties and the economic capacities of immigrants (see Table 6). Mostly (aged) parents, siblings or children left behind in the custodial care of parents were the beneficiaries.

Some only offer money in exceptional situations or during visits, but do not send regular remittances (because their parents do not need it or they do not have enough income). Less often they were able to invest in houses in their countries of origin.

Sometimes these remittances constitute an important proportion of the income in France. For those with small incomes, remittances are either not possible or only at the price of lowering living standards in France.

This is, for example, the case of the Malian migrant woman working as a cleaner in two part time jobs (for 1000 €) who sends each month about 300-350 € to support her family in Mali, above all her mother and one daughter still living in Mali. Remittances also remain a care duty towards her daughter she left back in Mali and that she is not able to bring to France.

Another Chinese immigrant woman sent about 2000 € per year to finance the school fees for her daughter left back in China.

For many immigrants remittances constitute an obligation and a strong “moral debt” towards their family members, above all parents and siblings, living in the home country.

Especially the costs for (health) care for elder parents are a reason for regular remittances for medical treatment. So for example an Algerian man who sent regularly a larger amount to support the care for his mother until she died.

But morally it was a problem for me. I had a bad consciousness because I left my mother, when she was very ill, was in need of me. Although my brothers were there, they were with her, and said that it is no problem. But I wanted to be with her myself, to be loyal.

Because it is an obligation, and I didn’t fulfil it 100%. I tried to do it from here, from far, I tried to give everything that she needed. But I saw it was not sufficient. My brothers and sisters took care for her. Also for her health care, one brother is doctor.

I sent money. I still send money, often. We employed a housemaid, so that the wife of my brother did not have all the burden of the work (with care for mother). Me and my brother, who also lives in France, we paid the housemaid together. We sent the money to pay her. (IP2: French-Algerian man, 33 years old, sponsored by French second generation woman of Algerian origin, security guard)

In the case of polygamous families, deprived from a common family life in France (de jure and de facto) family lives are split up into a family abroad and a family in France, a reason for men to send substantial remittances to their families left behind. This may also impact on their family life in France, as the maintenance of the family in France is shifted more in the responsibility of women. As it was the case for the Malian family (Interview 3), where both partners had to support with remittances their respective families in Mali.
Conflicts over remittances: Interest conflicts between families “here” and “there”

For several interviewees, that struggled hard to make a living for their families in France, it constituted a considerable burden to support their family members living in the home country. Remittances were thus at the origin of conflicts over family expenses among spouses (in France) or between emigrants and family members in the home country.

As was the case in a Turkish immigrant family that for a long time had supported their family members in Turkey, until they found themselves in financial troubles. The wife opposed sending further money, when she stopped working (as textile worker) after years of hardship. The cessation of remittances provoked a degradation of relations with the family in Turkey.

The daughter described it in the interview as follows:

Earlier our parents sent remittances to Turkey. They never cut off ties to Turkey (despite violent family conflicts). My father idealised his homeland Turkey. He did not want to recognize that people in Turkey (his father) and himself had changed.

The relatives in Turkey, as long as they could benefit from the money of my father, he was the king. From the day on, when my father did not have the financial ability any more to send them money, that they could live (they live much better than we do), then he became the “dishonourable son”, what the grandfather always repeated.

He sent very much money, 2000 Francs (305€) to 3000 Francs (475€) nearly each month. At that time this sum was a fortune in Turkey. We had a house in Turkey that was rented, and grandparents took the money from the rent.

He ceased to send money, from then on the relations with family in Turkey deteriorated. My father had no more money, my mother also had stopped working.

He ceased to send money because my mother began to flip out, after 30 years. Because she had enough of sending money to Turkey. She had to work day and night, 6 days a week. She could not take care of her children, she had to leave to work at 6 in the morning, came home at 8-9 in the evening. She did not want to give the money that she earned so hard here to people in Turkey who would not even want to thank her. (IP8/1: French-Turkish woman grown up in France, 35 years old, family reunification with father as child, commercial employee)

In the case, of an Algerian immigrant family the support of the husband for his children from a former marriage and his “second” family in the home country provoked conflicts with his children and wife in France, as the family in France suffered from a reduced family budget and financial difficulties.
7 Summary

The sample covered a broad variety of family migration patterns and trajectories, as well as diverse legal migrant statuses; it included three generations of immigrants from the largest immigrant groups in France.

This interview analysis provided interesting results concerning the way family migration patterns and dynamics interact with migration regimes and status, immigrant generation, gender relations and social norms and practices of family life.

On the one hand it highlighted the general sociological dynamics taking place within family structures, largely depending on the social class conditions of immigrants. On the other hand it focussed the particular constraints that deprive immigrants as well as their non-immigrant partners and family members, from a "normal" family life "like any other citizen". It provided insights into the multiple change processes relating to professional mobility, gender and women’s roles in the course of family migration processes. A further exploration of these different roles and strategies of migrants in family migration processes seems particularly fruitful for future research.

Civic stratification of family migration

The French migration system stratifies the rights of family migrants by creating different kinds of status (permits) and administrative procedures for the admission of family members, thereby establishing a hierarchy among groups of family migrants.

The legal migration regime in practice turns out as highly "selective" with regard to social class of family migrants and disadvantages "working poor", especially migrant women, who sponsor their foreign family members. In relation to the income levels as a condition for family migration, we conclude that legal status stratification reproduces and reinforces existing social class stratification, thereby operating as an instrument to “manage” family migration.

The more privileged migrant groups (spouses of French citizens, refugees, high skilled and high level professionals) encounter fewer hurdles for admission. Non-EU residents that want to sponsor their family members are clearly disadvantaged compared to (naturalised) French citizens. Nevertheless, access to permanent residence status (permit) and to French citizenship was restricted not only for family members joining a non-EU but also a French citizen in France.

The experiences of interviewees give an insight in the divergent treatment in administrative procedures, depending on nationality and income levels, and demonstrate the bureaucratic obstacles that result in very long admission procedures and waiting periods for the concerned family migrants. Moreover, these procedures cause prolonged separation or irregular residence (see chapter 4).

Professional integration and deskilling

Although often analysed separately as two distinct forms of migration, economic and familial migration are always – as it becomes evident from the analysed migration biographies - closely intertwined processes, to the extent that familial immigration is at the same time labour migration. We observed different patterns in regard to professional integration and barriers of family migrants, depending on their previous qualifications and their French language skills. However, employment was mostly limited to the unskilled, precarious and low paid job sectors; in the case of our interview partners these were a few “typical” sectors such as cleaning, child care and domestic work or security services. In several cases migrants experienced a professional downward mobility; in contrast, second generation immigrants benefited from a social upward mobility in terms of education (university degrees,
skilled professions). Though family migrants are generally authorised to work (without permit), most experienced legal discrimination as foreigners concerning the restricted access to the public employment sector.

The interviews revealed the important role played by sponsoring family members (in supporting the initial integration process of their family members, e.g. financial support of language courses), migrant community networks (access to jobs, employers) and public (subsidised) vocational training schemes for a successful integration in the labour market.

Changing family life and gender roles

In the migration context familial life underwent sometimes significant changes, concerning the roles of men and women, couple relations, child care arrangements or the socialisation of children and parent-child relations.

Women from the first and second generation both experienced socio-cultural role changes as fairly positive, particularly with respect to access to work and economic independence, to higher education and to liberties as women. In this sense, several interviewees considered the changing family structures in the migration context as a gain in personal freedom and a liberation from restrictive gender role models.

In some cases the dependant legal status (as a spouse) made migrant women more vulnerable of domestic violence. In other cases women with a permanent and independent legal status (naturalized second generation) were in a strong position to oppose familial violence (as in one case of forced marriage).

It also became apparent that foreigner’s laws can be mobilised as sometimes powerful “weapons” in couple and familial conflicts.

Transnational family lives

The interviews provided interesting insights into impacts of transnational family life that would merit further research. This concerned the frequent (involuntary) separation of families as a result of the numerous legal and bureaucratic barriers set up for the entry and admission of family members (see chapter 6).

In many cases the migration process of women involved leaving children behind (in the country of origin) during the first period of their immigration process, which, however, could prolong for many years, as the working and income conditions did not allow for a family reunification. Thus, other family members (such as parents or siblings) took charge of the care for children in the country of origin, which contributed to the continued sending of remittances to families back home. Familial remittances serve in many cases as a solidarity system to compensate missing social security and health care regimes in developing countries or poor rural regions of departure. Remittances may as well constitute a burden for the integration of migrant families in France, as the support for families in the home country may severely impact on their living standard in France, especially for already poor migrant worker families. Moreover, the care for older (ill) parents back home has become a major concern for immigrant families and a principal reason for the interviewed migrants to sponsor migration of family members on a temporary basis outside of family reunification procedures.
8 References and sources


Mikol Fanny / Chloé Tavan (2006): La mobilité professionnelle des ouvriers et employés immigrés, Données sociales - La société française, INSEE.


Internet sources – Websites

### 9 Appendix

Table 2 Binational marriages in France (1996-2007)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>All marriages</th>
<th>Both spouses French citizens</th>
<th>Both spouses foreign citizens</th>
<th>Binational couples Total</th>
<th>Binational couples male spouse French, wife foreigner</th>
<th>Binational couples male spouse foreigner, wife French</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>280,072</td>
<td>251,158</td>
<td>4,868</td>
<td>24,046</td>
<td>10,783</td>
<td>13,263</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>283,984</td>
<td>254,020</td>
<td>5,237</td>
<td>24,727</td>
<td>10,916</td>
<td>13,811</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>271,361</td>
<td>239,704</td>
<td>5,658</td>
<td>25,999</td>
<td>11,604</td>
<td>14,395</td>
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<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>286,191</td>
<td>250,252</td>
<td>5,897</td>
<td>30,042</td>
<td>13,638</td>
<td>16,404</td>
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<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>297,922</td>
<td>256,787</td>
<td>6,550</td>
<td>34,585</td>
<td>15,387</td>
<td>19,198</td>
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<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>288,255</td>
<td>241,129</td>
<td>7,281</td>
<td>39,845</td>
<td>17,397</td>
<td>22,448</td>
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<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>279,087</td>
<td>226,758</td>
<td>7,892</td>
<td>44,437</td>
<td>18,822</td>
<td>25,615</td>
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<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>275,963</td>
<td>220,598</td>
<td>8,565</td>
<td>46,800</td>
<td>19,539</td>
<td>27,261</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>271,598</td>
<td>220,649</td>
<td>8,326</td>
<td>42,623</td>
<td>18,505</td>
<td>24,118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>276,303</td>
<td>225,425</td>
<td>8,382</td>
<td>42,496</td>
<td>18,710</td>
<td>23,786</td>
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<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>267,260</td>
<td>220,644</td>
<td>8,303</td>
<td>38,313</td>
<td>17,263</td>
<td>21,050</td>
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<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>267,194</td>
<td>223,246</td>
<td>8,110</td>
<td>35,838</td>
<td>16,326</td>
<td>19,512</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: INED / INSEE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview</th>
<th>Types of family migration</th>
<th>Role (migrant/ dependant/ sponsor)</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Years in FR (in 2007)</th>
<th>Country of origin</th>
<th>Present immigration status</th>
<th>Present employment</th>
<th>Previous employment in country of origin</th>
<th>Employment of sponsor or dependent spouse</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interview 1</td>
<td>Marriage migration – spouse of French citizen (bi-national couple)</td>
<td>migrant, dependant (spouse)</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>China/ Hong-Kong</td>
<td>French citizenship</td>
<td>Social worker in a French-Chinese association</td>
<td>Social worker</td>
<td>husband: technician</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview 2</td>
<td>Marriage migration – spouse of a second generation Algerian woman (via family reunification)</td>
<td>migrant, dependant (spouse)</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Algeria</td>
<td>French citizenship</td>
<td>Security guard</td>
<td>Business man, owner of transport company</td>
<td>wife: educator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview 3</td>
<td>Family reunification – spouse of Malian man (in polygamous marriage); no regular family reunification, regularisation after 6 years of irregular stay and family life in France</td>
<td>migrant, dependant (spouse)</td>
<td>37-40</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Mali</td>
<td>Temporary residence permit (1 year, private and family life)</td>
<td>cleaner</td>
<td>no information</td>
<td>husband: mason</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview 4</td>
<td>Family reunification – joined her father as child (whole family) - Marriage migration – sponsored family reunification with her Turkish husband</td>
<td>migrant, dependant (child) + sponsor</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>French citizenship; (Permanent residence permit at the time of applying for family reunion with her husband)</td>
<td>cashier in a supermarket</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>husband: construction worker (merchant in Turkey)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interview 5</td>
<td>Family migration (whole family) – accompanying his wife coming to FR as high skilled professional (in multinational enterprise)</td>
<td>migrant, dependant (spouse)</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Bulgaria</td>
<td>Temporary residence permit (1 year)</td>
<td>Athletics trainer in sports club (part time)</td>
<td>University sports professor and vice-director of the University chair</td>
<td>wife: management position in multinational enterprise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview 6</td>
<td>Marriage migration – spouse of a French citizen (bi-national couple)</td>
<td>migrant, dependant (spouse)</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Ethiopia</td>
<td>Permanent residence permit (10 years)</td>
<td>home help/cleaner</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>husband: chef cook</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>Types of family migration</td>
<td>Role (migrant/ dependant/ sponsor)</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Years in FR (in 2007)</td>
<td>Country of origin</td>
<td>Present immigration status</td>
<td>Present employment</td>
<td>Previous employment in country of origin</td>
<td>Employment of sponsor or dependant spouse</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview 7</td>
<td>Family reunification with her father (as child); - Marriage migration - sponsored family reunification for her Algerian spouse</td>
<td>migrant dependant (child) + sponsor</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Algeria</td>
<td>French citizenship</td>
<td>University Diploma (DESS), searching employment and part time jobs</td>
<td>(not relevant, school in France)</td>
<td>husband: guard in a public park (electronic engineer in Algeria)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview 8</td>
<td>Family reunification - with their father (as children) [ Elder sister: forced marriage in Turkey - annulled before husband came to France]</td>
<td>migrant, dependant (child)</td>
<td>35 (F1)/24 (F2)</td>
<td>F1 /F2</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>French citizenship</td>
<td>commercial employee (elder sister) student (younger sister)</td>
<td>(not relevant, school in France)</td>
<td>parents: textile industry workers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview 9</td>
<td>Independent immigration, marriage in France: - Overstaying visa, four years in irregular status, then marriage with French of Moroccan origin</td>
<td>independent migrant, + spouse of French citizen</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Algeria</td>
<td>no residence permit (after marriage residence permit in process of examination)</td>
<td>security guard in a supermarket</td>
<td>commercial executive employee</td>
<td>wife: student / cashier in supermarket</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview 10</td>
<td>Independent immigration, marriage in France: - Irregular stay for 2 years, then regularisation as spouse of a French citizen - Family reunification with her daughter (living in China)</td>
<td>independent migrant; + spouse of French citizen + sponsor for child</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>Temporary residence permit (1 year)</td>
<td>part time jobs as masseuse and cleaner (private households)</td>
<td>Commercial employee</td>
<td>husband: Lawyer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview 11</td>
<td>Marriage migration – wife of a political refugee (from Mali)</td>
<td>migrant dependant (spouse)</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Mali</td>
<td>French citizenship</td>
<td>Social mediator in an association (since ten years, before accountant)</td>
<td>student</td>
<td>(ex-)husband: trainer ( for adult vocational training)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview 12</td>
<td>Family reunification – joined her first spouse a Moroccan immigrant; after divorce stays as single mother with her son in France; - Marriage migration – sponsor for family reunification with her second Moroccan husband</td>
<td>migrant dependant (spouse) + sponsor (for her husband)</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Morocco</td>
<td>Permanent residence permit (10 years)</td>
<td>cleaner</td>
<td></td>
<td>husband: cleaner (merchant in Morocco)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>Types of family migration</td>
<td>Role (migrant/ dependant/ sponsor)</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Years in FR (in 2007)</td>
<td>Country of origin</td>
<td>Present immigration status</td>
<td>Present employment</td>
<td>Previous employment in country of origin</td>
<td>Employment of sponsor or dependant spouse</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 Chinese couple</td>
<td>Family reunification after Irregular immigration: - regularisation of woman with her children born in France, man expelled to China; - later family reunification with husband and son</td>
<td>F (sponsor for husband) M dependant migrant (spouse)</td>
<td>40 (ca.)</td>
<td>F+ M</td>
<td>14 (F) 6 (M)</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>- Permanent residence permit 10 years (woman) - Temporary residence permit 1 year (man)</td>
<td>Tailoring job (work at home)</td>
<td>Employee in state enterprise, tailoring</td>
<td>Husband: Tailoring job /unemployed (Employee in state enterprise in China)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 Moroccan woman and mother-in-law</td>
<td>Family reunification – joined her French husband (of Moroccan origin)</td>
<td>migrant dependant (spouse)</td>
<td>25 (ca.) / 55 (ca.)</td>
<td>F1 / F2</td>
<td>3 (F1) 27 (F2)</td>
<td>Morocco</td>
<td>Temporary residence permit (1 year) - French citizenship (F2)</td>
<td>part time jobs as cleaner (F1) cleaner (F2)</td>
<td>hairdresser (F1)</td>
<td>husband: mechanic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 Algerian woman</td>
<td>Family reunification - as spouse of Algerian immigrant</td>
<td>migrant, dependant (spouse)</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Algeria</td>
<td>Permanent residence permit (10 years)</td>
<td>child care assistant (day mother)</td>
<td>secretary</td>
<td>husband: worker (retired)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 Algerian woman, divorced from violent husband</td>
<td>Family reunification – as spouse of Algerian immigrant</td>
<td>migrant, dependant (spouse)</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>Algeria</td>
<td>Permanent residence permit (10 years)</td>
<td>pensioner (cleaner)</td>
<td>no employment (mother /house wife)</td>
<td>husband: gardener (retired)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 French-Algerian women born in France</td>
<td>Family migration – return migration to France of French-Algerian family living in Algeria - Family reunification with Algerian husband</td>
<td>second generation + sponsor for spouse</td>
<td>40 (ca.)</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>32 (22 + 10)*</td>
<td>France</td>
<td>Dual French-Algerian citizenship</td>
<td>domestic help</td>
<td>no employment (mother /house wife)</td>
<td>husband: seasonal worker (vintage), gardener, truck driver, (restaurant in Algeria)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* 22 years before return migration to Algeria; 10 years since return migration to France
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conditions</th>
<th>Family member of French citizen</th>
<th>Family reunification with non-EU national (regroupement familial)</th>
<th>Family members of refugees</th>
<th>Other foreigners with “personal and familial ties”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sponsor /conditions</td>
<td>French nationality</td>
<td>Foreigner (non-EU) with regular residence since 18 months; Temporary (one year) or permanent residence title</td>
<td>Recognized status of refugee, subsidiary protection or stateless</td>
<td>Other persons with strong personal and familial ties in France (outside of categories constituting right for family reunification or entitlements): e.g. those living in couple without marriage (e.g. in civil partnership PACS- partenariat civil de solidarité) (CESEDA Art. L-313-11 7°)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Eligible family members | • spouse  
• children under age of 21 or in charge of parents  
• ascendants in charge of French and their spouses  
• parents of a French minor living in France | • spouse aged over 18  
• children of couple aged under 18 (incl. adopted children and under juridical custody) | • spouse and minor children  
• partner  
• ascendants (direct in first degree) of unaccompanied minor refugees | |
| Procedural conditions | Visa in the country of origin:  
- Transcription of marriage (in French civil register) if marriage abroad  
- Visa of long term stay issued in country of origin  
Admission of family members in France:  
- spouses of French that have entered regularly and have lived 6 months in community with their French spouse. | Application for family reunification at prefecture in France (by sponsor), waiting of sponsored family members in country of origin:  
- Application for whole family  
- Family member in country of origin, authorisation of entry  
- Visa issued by consulate after admission of family reunification in France;  
Admission of family members in France:  
- possible for spouse having already a residence permit (of one year) in France. | Visa issued by French authorities in country of origin:  
- Regular entry to France (with long term visa)  
- Recognition of civil status and verification of affiliation, age (of children)  
- Marriage before recognition of refugee status, or otherwise having been celebrated at least one year before application (under restriction of one year of effective common life) | Possible regularisation and application for permit in France (exempt from condition of valid residence visa of more than 3 months):  
- regularisation based on entitlement  
- regularisation based on appreciation of integration and familial ties |
| economic resources and housing | Minimum income:  
- Monthly average income at the level of SMIC (1) (for the 12 last months); SMIC plus a tenth for families with 4 or 5 persons and plus a fifth for 6 or more persons (2);  
Housing conditions:  
- normal accommodation according to regional standards, minimum size of apartment (3) | | | |
| Integration | - pre-evaluation of knowledge of language and republican values in the country of origin (in case of negative evaluation obligatory 2 months formation)  
- obligatory signature of integration contract or family integration contract (parents) | - pre-evaluation of knowledge of language and republican values in the country of origin (in case of negative evaluation obligatory 2 months formation)  
- obligatory signature of integration contract or family integration contract (parents)  
- Respect of republican legal principles (by sponsor) | Familial and personal ties in France are appreciated regards their intensity, length and stability, the conditions of existence and insertion of the concerned in French society, and the nature of ties with family members still living in his home country; Ties are of such kind, that a refusal of residence permit would constitute a disproportionate interference in his/her private and familial life. His/her insertion in French society is evaluated considering in particular the knowledge of Republican values. |
### Access to permanent residence status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Long-term entry visa</strong> (valid for one year as residence and work permit in France). Renewal of residence permit each year: refusal in case of cessation of common life as couple (up to four years after marriage). <strong>Access to permanent residence permit (10 years):</strong> application after three years of marriage (spouses) or three years of regular stay (parents) - conditioned to integration - exclusion grounds: public order, living in polygamy, criminal offence (violence against minors)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Temporary residence permit (valid 1 year, carte vie privée et familiale), renewal each year</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Access to permanent residence permit (10 years):</strong> application after three years of regular residence - conditioned to Republican integration (knowledge of language and Republican principles), compliance with integration contract/family integration contract - exclusion grounds: public order, living in polygamy, criminal offence (violence against minors)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Immediate entitlement to permanent residence permit (10 years) for spouse and children (if regular entry with visa)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Temporary residence permit &quot;family and private life&quot; (1 year, renewal each year) during first five years:</strong> <strong>Access to permanent residence permit (10 years):</strong> After five years of regular continuous residence</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Notes:
(1) The SMIC (salaire minimum de croissance) is the legally fixed minimum wage that cannot be undercut. As of the 1st of July 2008 the amount of the SMIC was fixed at a monthly gross wage of 1,321 € or a net wage of 1,037 € (for a fulltime employment with 35 hours weekly).
See [http://vosdroits.service-public.fr/particuliers/F2300.xhtml](http://vosdroits.service-public.fr/particuliers/F2300.xhtml)
(2) not counted as income are social benefits (family and child benefits, housing subsidies, RMI, pensions);
(3) m2 per person: e.g. 52m2 in zone A for family of 5 persons; 54m2 in zone B, 58m2 in zone C
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview</th>
<th>Kind of procedure</th>
<th>Country of origin of family member</th>
<th>Length of procedure</th>
<th>Control of couple relations/sham marriage</th>
<th>Refusal for insufficient income/housing</th>
<th>Appeal procedures</th>
<th>Failed regularisation in the country/irregular status</th>
<th>Family member waiting abroad</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Chinese-French couple spouse of French citizen</td>
<td>Hong-Kong</td>
<td>6 months</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Algerian couple family reunification/spouse of foreign citizen</td>
<td>Algeria</td>
<td>8 months</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Malian couple regularisation (family ties) after irregular stay</td>
<td>Mali</td>
<td></td>
<td>yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Turkish couple family reunification/spouse of foreign citizen</td>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Bulgarian family accompanying family of high skilled professional</td>
<td>Bulgaria</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>French-Ethiopian family family of French citizen</td>
<td>Djibouti</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>French-Algerian couple spouse of French citizen</td>
<td>Algeria</td>
<td>14 months</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>French-Turkish couple spouse of French citizen</td>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>12 months*</td>
<td></td>
<td>yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Algerian-French couple spouse of French citizen</td>
<td>Algeria</td>
<td>in process</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Chinese-French couple spouse of French citizen</td>
<td>China</td>
<td></td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Malian couple spouse of political refugee</td>
<td>Mali</td>
<td>5 months</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Moroccan couple family reunification/spouse of foreign citizen</td>
<td>Morocco</td>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Chinese family family reunification/spouse of foreign citizen</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>French-Moroccan couple spouse of French citizen</td>
<td>Morocco</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Algerian family family reunification with child</td>
<td>Algeria</td>
<td>7 years</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Algerian couple family reunification/spouse of foreign citizen</td>
<td>Algeria</td>
<td>?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>French-Algerian family spouse of French citizen</td>
<td>Algeria</td>
<td>5 months</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*forced marriage annulled (by sponsoring French Turkish wife), procedure stopped
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview</th>
<th>Remittances</th>
<th>Amount (per month/year)</th>
<th>Beneficiaries</th>
<th>Main motives</th>
<th>Country</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>not regular</td>
<td>90€ per month</td>
<td>parents</td>
<td></td>
<td>China/Hong-Kong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>regular</td>
<td>no information</td>
<td>mother</td>
<td>support for health care/housemaid</td>
<td>Algeria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>regular</td>
<td>300-350€ per month (woman); husband 500€ per month</td>
<td>woman: mother, daughter, sisters, brothers; husband: his family (mother, sister), his second wife and three children; first wife's family (mother and daughter)</td>
<td>subsistence of family members</td>
<td>Mali</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>none</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>no means available (low income)</td>
<td>Turkey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>no information</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Bulgaria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>none</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>family in Country of origin has good living standard; no means available (low income)</td>
<td>Djibouti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>not regular</td>
<td>parents (of husband)</td>
<td></td>
<td>family built a house in Algeria</td>
<td>Algeria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>regular (stopped)</td>
<td>300-475 per month</td>
<td>parents</td>
<td>parents sent remittances during their whole working life, stopped after retirement, financial problems</td>
<td>Turkey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>not regular</td>
<td>parents</td>
<td>only sometimes on demand and gifts</td>
<td></td>
<td>Algeria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>regular</td>
<td>2000€ per year</td>
<td>daughter</td>
<td>school fees for daughter</td>
<td>China</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>regular</td>
<td>130€ per month/1500€ per year (woman); 300-400€ (ex-husband)</td>
<td>parents (parents, brothers and sisters of ex-husband)</td>
<td>subsistence of parents</td>
<td>Mali</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>regular</td>
<td>800-1000€ per year</td>
<td>parents</td>
<td>medical treatment for aged parents</td>
<td>Morocco</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>no information</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>child left back in China</td>
<td>China</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>regular</td>
<td>no information</td>
<td>parents / parents-in-law</td>
<td></td>
<td>Morocco</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>none</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>send money only in case of need; family in Algeria is not poor; parents have died; they bought a house in Algeria</td>
<td>Algeria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>not regular</td>
<td>no information</td>
<td>husband's family and children from first marriage</td>
<td>bought a house for family of husband in Algeria</td>
<td>Algeria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>none</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Before husband supported his ill mother; but the parents have died; most of family now lives in France; constructed a house in Algeria</td>
<td>Algeria</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>