

**IMMIGRATION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION
IN THE SECOND DECADE OF THE 21ST CENTURY:
PROBLEM OR SOLUTION?**

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Abstract

This article presents immigration as an important issue discussed within European Union (EU). The author shows some statistics on international migration, population stocks of national and foreign (non-national) citizens. In destination countries, international migration may be used as a tool to solve specific labour market shortages. At the same time though, international migration alone will almost certainly not reverse the ongoing trend of population ageing experienced in many parts of the EU.

The main aim of this paper is to show that immigration is one of the most efficient objects of interest to European Union citizens and leaders. In the interest of the EU and its Member States is therefore to show that they are developing an overall strategy for managing migration for the benefit of all stakeholders: the European Union, its citizens, migrants and the source countries of migration.

Migration policies within the EU are increasingly concerned with attracting a particular migrant profile, often in an attempt to alleviate specific skills shortages. Besides policies to encourage labour recruitment, immigration policy is often focused on two areas: preventing irregular migration and the illegal employment of migrants who are not permitted to work, and promoting the integration of immigrants into society. In the EU, significant resources have been mobilised to fight people smuggling and trafficking networks.

Keywords: EU immigration policy, international migration, labour force, labour market.

JEL classification: F22, J11.

Introduction

The first half of 2011 brought the uncertainty about the common immigration policy in the EU. In May 2011 Britain has warned against a “full-scale immigration crisis” at the heart of Europe as EU countries moved to end passport-free travel. EU faced a problem how to deal with thousands of people fleeing violence-ravaged North African countries for Europe¹.

Could the increased of refugees from Africa to South of Europe mean the failure of a common immigration policy?

Immigration within European Union has always been seen with much skepticism. The birth rates in EU are falling but the concerns about raising citizenship figure brought about by an increasing amount of immigrants into Europe have forced many countries to adopt a much harsher approach to immigration².

Kofi A. Annan³ in his speech made to the European Parliament on 29 January in 2004 said: “One of the biggest tests for the enlarged European Union, in the years and decades to come, will be how it manages the challenge of immigration. If European societies rise to this challenge, immigration will enrich and strengthen them. If they fail to do so, the result may be declining living standards and social division. There can be no doubt that European societies need immigrants. Europeans are living longer and having fewer children. Without immigration, the population of the soon-to-be twenty-five Member States of the EU will drop, from about 450 million now to under 400 million in 2050”⁴.

Europe has always attracted immigrants from around the world. Immigration was, is and will be an opportunity, a threat and a challenge for Europe. In the EU there is a very different approach to immigrants. For some, immigrants are perceived as beneficial labour force, whose shortcomings have negative impact on GDP of their economies, for others – immigrants are a threat to increase the risk of vandalism, accidents, crime and even terrorism. Still others see the immigration as a purpose of rising costs and a falling standard of living of citizens. Finally today, migration arouses a lot of negative emotion because of instability in North Africa and mass illegal immigration to Europe.

The aim of this paper is to present that immigration is and will remain one of the most important objects of interest to European Union citizens. In the interest of the EU and its Member States is therefore to show that they are developing an overall strategy for managing migration for the benefit of all stakeholders: the European Union, its citizens, migrants and the source countries of migration.

1. EU Immigration policy

Immigrants are part of the economic and cultural life of the EU. They are presented at all levels of activity, complementing the deficiency, which cannot be filled by local workers. Among them are highly qualified IT professionals, nurses and other healthcare workers, as well as those professions, in which EU's citizens no longer want to take (3D jobs⁵). The challenge is to ensure the benefits of immigration for all - the EU's citizens and society, immigrants and their families and possibly to their countries of origin⁶.

Legal immigrants are needed to fill gaps in the EU labour force, as the EU's own population grows older and its birth rate declines. However, the EU needs to curb illegal immigration and cooperate with other countries to arrange the return of irregular immigrants on a voluntary basis. The EU also has a duty to protect genuine asylum-seekers fleeing persecution or serious harm. The aim of European leaders is to devise a common strategy, to help each country to cope with the challenges and to benefit from the opportunities. This is why they have agreed on an European Pact on Migration and Asylum⁷.

The European Pact on Immigration and Asylum commits its Member States in 5 key areas⁸:

1. to organise legal immigration to take account of the priorities, needs and reception capabilities determined by each Member State, and to encourage integration;
2. to control illegal immigration by ensuring the return of illegal immigrants to their country of origin or a country of transit;
3. to make border controls more effective;
4. to construct a Europe of asylum;
5. to create a comprehensive partnership with countries of origin and transit to encourage synergy between migration and development.

In the European Union, each Member State shall determine its own national immigration policy. It is free to decide on the procedures for entry, the types of jobs available for immigrants, their countries of origin and the maximum number of persons. EU leaders have recognized, however, that dealing with immigration is a shared priority and that their countries face similar challenges. So they decided to coordinate some important aspects of immigration policy.

The immigration policy aims to establish a framework for legal migration, taking fully into account the importance of integration into host societies. The EU measures on legal immigration cover the conditions of entry and residence for certain categories of immigrants, such as highly

qualified workers subject to the “EU Blue Card Directive” and students and researchers. Family reunification and long-term residents are also provided for.

The EU is currently discussing Commission proposals for further Directives on the conditions of entry and residence for seasonal workers and intra-corporate transferees, as well as a single permit. The aim is to simplify migration procedures and give migrants clear employment-related rights. Furthermore, the Long-Term Residence Directive has created a single status for non-EU nationals who have been lawfully resident in an EU country for at least five years, thus establishing a legal basis for equal treatment in all EU countries.

The EU approach to migration also addresses the issue of integration. Successful integration of migrants into their host society is essential to maximise the opportunities afforded by legal migration and to realise the potential that immigration has for EU development. With this in mind, the EU is promoting European cooperation to develop common approaches and exchange information at EU level.

Illegal immigration into the EU must be limited of its many negative consequences. It also makes it difficult to identify genuine refugees. It is common that immigrants come in mixed groups, in which we have people whose main motivation is seeking a better life in the EU and others who come to escape persecution and serious human rights violation⁹. EU countries have a long tradition of providing a safe haven for legitimate asylum-seekers. Therefore a sustainable and credible policy approach to the management of migration requires addressing the issue of irregular migration. The EU is tackling the issue through specific measures targeting employers who hire undeclared migrant workers and by seeking to set up a humane and effective return policy, in line with the Charter of Fundamental Rights. It is also targeting human trafficking networks and smugglers who take advantage of undocumented persons.

Another important aspect of the common EU approach to migration is also building dialogue and partnerships with countries of origin and transit, based on solidarity and shared responsibility. Underpinning such actions is the “global approach” to migration, the EU’s strategic framework for external cooperation in migration and asylum. In fact, EU countries have cooperated closer to defining a common policy on asylum than they have on the more complex and wider issue of immigration.

During the European Council on the 23–24 June 2011, EU leaders decided that recent developments have put European asylum policy under strain. In their opinion it is crucial that the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) be completed by 2012, based on high protection standards combined with fair and effective procedures capable of preventing abuses

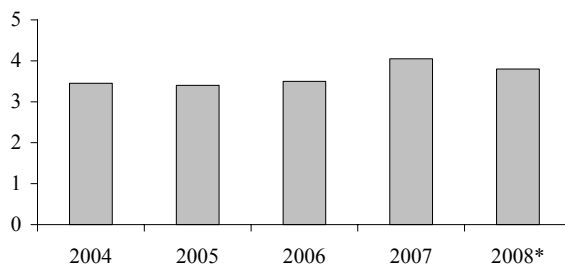
and allowing for rapid examination of asylum applications in order to ensure the sustainability of the system¹⁰.

The cause of many of fears regarding immigration comes from 1989 when the Berlin Wall came down. When this occurred there was a mass migration from the east to the perceived prosperous west. In all in the first few months that the wall was down over one million people immigrated. This number of people will have an effect on even the strongest of economies, let alone one that is also suffering the costs of unification and starting to support and integrate a former poor communist country¹¹.

Today the problem of illegal immigration is increasing again in connection with the refugees from North Africa. Even to the extent that ponders the future of Schengen. Fortunately, the speculation is over and the free movement of people and workers within the EU is not threatened. European leaders back an EU immigration policy only in so far as it means tighter border controls and more repatriation. To satisfy this demand, the European Commission has proposed giving Frontex more powers and is due to publish in 2012 a raft of legislation intended to upgrade Schengen area border controls with new technology. EU countries have little interest in the Commission's other ideas to facilitate more legal immigration, however. This was true even when Europe's economic conditions were favourable and unemployment relatively low. But the creation of more legal migration routes into the EU, like a single European residency permit, would greatly strengthen the Commission's hand in negotiations with neighbouring countries on border checks and the return of unauthorised immigrants¹².

But should European states even try to stop economic migration? Europe's population is set to decline over the next 40 years. Italy will lose 28% of its population by 2050. In order to maintain its working age population, Italy would need to start importing more than 350,000 immigrants per year or, alternatively, keep its citizens working until they are 75¹³. Without immigration Germany can not hold a leading position in exports. Nearly a third of 967,860 new citizens of Germany has Turkish roots¹⁴.

During 2008 about 3.8 million people immigrated into one of the EU Member States (Figure 1) and at least 2.3 million emigrants are reported to have left one of the EU Member States. Compared with 2007, immigration to EU Member States is estimated to have decreased by 6% but emigration to have increased by 13%. It should be noted that these figures do not represent the migration flows to/from the EU as a whole, since they also include international flows within the EU – between different Member States. Just over half of the total immigrants to EU Member States, in other words 1.9 million people, were previously residing outside the EU.



* Data for 2008 not fully comparable with data for previous years due to change in methodology, source and definiti.

Fig. 1. Total immigration in EU-27 (million)

Source: Eurostat (migr_imm1ctz).

International migration plays a significant role in the size and structure of the population in most EU Member States. The increase in the total population of EU Member States in recent years was mainly due to high net migration. From 2004 to 2008 the population of EU Member States increased, on average, by 1.7 million per year, solely because inflows outweighed outflows. Although immigration to the EU Member States fell in 2008 and emigration increased, they still resulted in net migration which contributed 71% of the total population increase¹⁵. In many EU Member States immigration is not only increasing the total population but also bringing a much younger population (Figure 2). On 1 January 2009 the median age of the EU population was 40.6 years. The median age of immigrants in 2008 ranged from 24.8 years (in Portugal) to 37.5 years (in Greece)¹⁶.

The total number of non-nationals, in other words people who are not citizens of their country of residence, living on the territory of the EU Member States on 1 January 2009 was 31.8 million, representing 6.4% of the EU-27's population. One year earlier, on 1 January 2008, the number of non-nationals was 30.8 million, or 6.2% of the total population. More than one third (a total of 11.9 million persons) of all non-nationals living in the EU-27 on 1 January 2009 were citizens of a different EU Member State from the one where they were living.

In absolute terms, the largest numbers of non-nationals living in the EU on 1 January 2009 were in Germany (7.2 million persons), Spain (5.7 million), the United Kingdom (4.2 million), Italy (3.9 million) and France (3.7 million). Non-nationals in these five Member States collectively represented 77.6% of the total number of non-nationals living in the EU-27, compared with a 62.8% share for the same five Member States within the entire EU-27 population. In relative terms, the EU Member State with the highest share of non-nationals was Luxembourg, where non-nationals accounted for 43.5% of the population at the beginning of

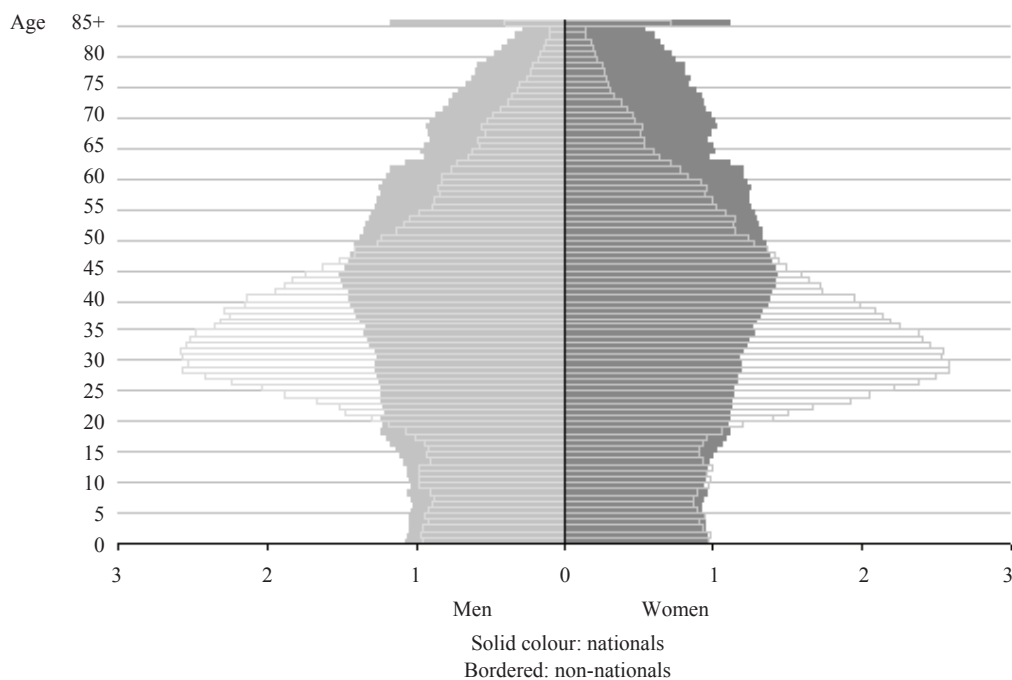


Fig. 2. Age structure of the national and non-national populations, EU, 2009 (Excluding Belgium, Cyprus and Romania) (%)

Source: Eurostat (migr_pop2ctz).

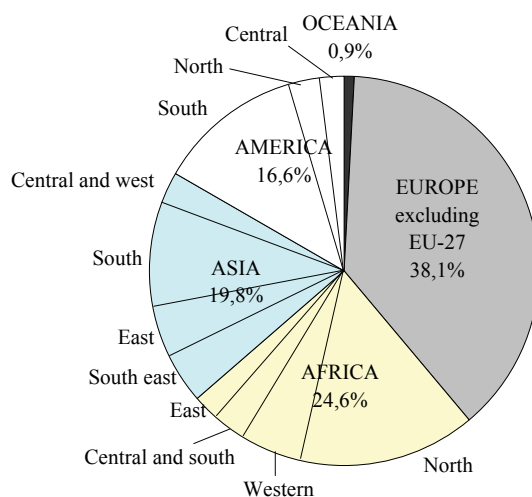


Fig. 3. Citizens of non-member countries in the EU-27, 2009 (%)

Source: Eurostat (migr_pop1ctz).

2009. The vast majority (86.3%) of non-nationals living in Luxembourg were citizens of other EU Member States. In 2009, a high proportion of non-nationals (10% or more of the resident population) was also observed in Latvia, Cyprus, Estonia, Spain and Austria. In contrast, the share of non-national was less than 1% in Poland, Romania and Bulgaria¹⁷.

Figure 3 shows the distribution by continent of origin of citizens from non-member countries living in EU Member States, the largest proportion (38.1%) were citizens of a European country outside of the EU-27, a total of 7.2 million people; among these more than half were citizens of Turkey, Albania or Ukraine. The second biggest group was from Africa (24.6%), followed by Asia (19.8%), the Americas (16.6%) and Oceania (0.9%). More than half of the citizens of African countries that were living in the EU were from North Africa, often from Morocco or Algeria. Many Asian non-nationals living in the EU came from south or east Asia, in particular from India or China. Citizens of Ecuador, Brazil and Colombia made up the largest share of non-nationals from the Americas living in the EU.

Across the EU as a whole, Turkish citizens made up the biggest group of non-nationals (Figure 4). This group comprised 2.4 million people in 2009, or 7.5% of all non-nationals living in the EU. The second biggest group was Romanians living in another EU Member State (6.2% of the non-national population), followed by Moroccans. The group of non-nationals with the most significant increase over the period 2001 to 2009 was Romanians, whose number living in other Member States increased more than six fold over the period considered (from 0.3 million

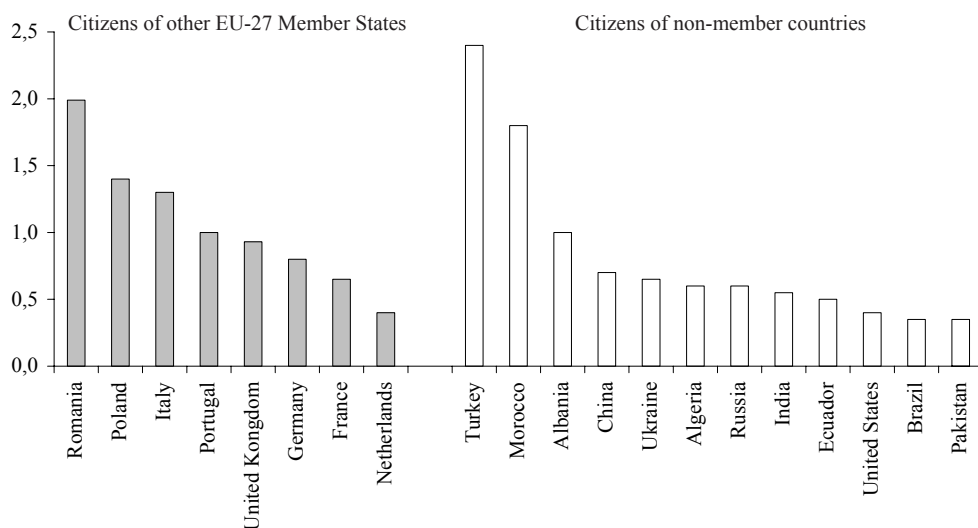


Fig. 4. Main countries of origin of non-nationals, EU-27, 2009 (million)

Source: Eurostat (migr_pop1ctz).

in 2001 to 2.0 million people by 2009). The number of Polish and Chinese citizens also increased significantly during this period, and citizens from both of these countries figured among the ten largest non-national groups in 2009¹⁸.

2. The positive role of immigration for hosting country

Why the European Union needs additional immigrants and workers from outside? First they are vital for ensuring economic growth and prosperity. They will become even more so in coming years because of ageing problem, which is a long-term trend that must be addressed even if unemployment goes up during the economic crisis.

Immigrants, especially skilled people, will play an essential role in maintaining high employment levels, doing important jobs and helping to fund pensions for the rising number of senior citizens. Of course, immigration will not be the only one solution for this problem. These includes many other issues as raising birth rates, enhancing more people, especially women into work etc.

Another problem is a shortage of talent, which could not be seen as the crisis which is still visible somewhere on the horizon. In many regions and many sectors this problem has already occurred. In the EU's total employed population, 1.7% are highly qualified workers from non-EU countries. By comparison, that category of immigrants forms 9.9% in Australia, 7.3% in Canada and 3.2% in the US¹⁹.

Some EU countries have introduced national system to attract skilled and highly skilled immigrants into certain sectors. This includes IT and engineering where there are not enough qualified EU citizens to fill vacant posts. EU is working now to establish such a system for the whole Union, what is particularly important if we are talking about the internal problem of skills shortage. For example, emerging markets such as Poland and the Czech Republic have already experienced talent drain. Highly skilled workers from these countries are seeking employment in the euro zone, because of better condition and as a result of above mentioned national system to attract skilled immigrants. In fact, local Polish and Czech employers are forced to raise wages to motivate a shrinking pool of workers and in both countries, wages growth is faster than productivity²⁰. That's why such common system should be a part of immigration policy to improve the growth in all members states, the more that talent shortage is a problem regarding to whole EU and not only individual countries. This system would mean offering highly qualified immigrants fast-track entry, an EU-wide recognized residence title (EU Blue Card), favourable residence conditions and the possibility of moving from one EU country to another after two years' initial residence. But there are still disagreements about which qualifications

are to be included and how much the immigrants should earn. It has been argued that to qualify for a card, an immigrant should have been offered a job with 1.5 times the average salary in the country concerned.

Interesting data relate also to immigrant entrepreneurship, particularly in Germany, where from the late 90s of 20th century number of companies founded by them has doubled. In 2008, over 100 thousand immigrants were entrepreneurs and they employed 750,000 workers. These data indicate a new important quality, namely the impact of immigration on entrepreneurship and innovation. And that in a world of global competition plays a significant role.

Conclusions

Greater mobility brings with it opportunities and challenges. A balanced, comprehensive and common migration policy will help the EU to seize these opportunities while tackling the challenges head-on. It will have the added advantage of making a valuable contribution to the EU's economic development and performance in the long term.

Paraphrasing the words of Kofi A. Annan "In this twenty-first century, migrants need Europe. But Europe also needs migrants. A closed Europe would be a meaner, poorer, weaker, older Europe. An open Europe will be a fairer, richer, stronger, younger Europe – provided Europe manages immigration well"²¹.

Notes

¹ Cecil (2011)

² Smith (2011).

³ Kofi Atta Annan was the seventh Secretary-General of the UN from 1 January 1997 to 31 December 2006.

⁴ *Why Europe needs an immigration policy* (2011).

⁵ 3 Ds jobs: Dirty, Dangerous and Demeaning, often Dirty, Dangerous and Demanding or Dirty, Dangerous and Difficult.

⁶ *An opportunity...* (2009), p. 3.

⁷ The European Pact on Immigration and Asylum was agreed on October, 16th, 2008.

⁸ *The European Pact on Immigration and Asylum* (2011).

⁹ *An opportunity...* (2009), p. 3.

¹⁰ Conclusions... (2011), p. 11.

¹¹ Smith (2011).

¹² Brady (2011).

¹³ *Trends in Worker Requirements* (2007).

¹⁴ *Milion nowych obywateli* (2011)

- ¹⁵ Oblak Flander (2011).
¹⁶ *Migration and Migrant Statistics*, Eurostat (2011).
¹⁷ Ibidem.
¹⁸ Ibidem.
¹⁹ <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/7667169.stm> (23.07.2011).
²⁰ *Gone West: Why Eastern Europe is Labouring* (2008), p. 4.
²¹ *Why Europe needs an immigration policy* (2011).

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