

Migration Patterns in the European Union

Dr. Vishal Dubey

Professor

Department of Economics

G.B. Pant Degree College, Kachhla, Budaun

Email: ksh.vishal@gmail.com

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Abstract

This paper examines migration patterns in 27 countries of the European Union. The migration pattern suggests that labour flows from poorer to richer countries, especially from East to West. Geographical proximity and areas having a large diaspora of nationalities are other pull factors in attracting migrants. The New Pact on Migration establishes a common approach to migration and asylum that is based on solidarity, responsibility, and respect for human rights. It manages and normalises migration for the long term, providing certainty, clarity and decent conditions for people arriving in the EU. However, the open movement inside the EU is causing strife and tensions between EU members. There should be a functioning external border, without which internal border control between member states would not be meaningful, as recent strife between Germany, Poland and Italy has shown. Migration could be a solution for unemployment, but it needs to be seen in the future how these European countries would deal with the mass exodus of refugees from North Africa, Ukraine, and how they will deal with the problem of return of asylum seekers who are denied entry at the borders, and how well the responsibility is shared between the Union members.

Keywords

European Union, Migration, Asylum, Labour market, New Migration Pact

Introduction

Recently huge influx of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers in 2015 and more recently from Ukraine and Syria has created a lot of debate on the rules and regulations governing the migrants and asylum seekers. Europeans are increasingly shutting doors for immigrants to outsource the refugee problem. The New Pact on Migration is viewed as historic as it proposes to assess the migrants at the borders and send back those whose application are rejected, and set up the detention centres till the decision is taken. The pact is criticized by the social and charitable institutions on the grounds that these rules need to be relaxed in case of a mass exodus of refugees and asylum seekers into the European Union. As most of the countries are not able to bear the burden of mass exodus, they are setting detention centres in nearby developing/ third world countries, such as in Albania, Rwanda, Tunisia and Morocco. At present, the unemployment rates in EU countries are at historic and job vacancies have increased, which is helping in accommodating the skilled migrants. If it has been otherwise, it would have been difficult to accommodate the large influx of refugees/ migrants and would have resulted in over-heating of the economy.

Labour Market in the EU & the Euro Area

Table 1 below reflects the labour market skills and innovation of the European Union and Euro area in 2022, along with the comparator countries as OECD countries. The employment rate in the EU (54.1) is less than in the Euro Area (56.1) and quite low when compared to OECD countries (57.5). Across the category of men and women, there is a gap in the employment rates of men between the EU (60.0) and the comparator OECD countries (65.4).

Table 1: Labour Market , Skills and Innovation of the European Union and Euro Area, 2022

Variables	European Union (EU)	Euro Area	OECD Average Comparator Countries
Employment rate (aged 15 and over, %)	54.1	56.1	57.5
Men	60.0	61.2	65.4
Women	48.5	51.4	50.1
Participation Rate (aged 15 and over, %)	58.1	60.0	60.9
Avg. hours worked per year	1571	1601	1752
Unemployment rate, LFS (15 & over, %)	6.1	6.4	5.0

Unemp. Rate, Youth (15-24, %)	14.5	16.3	10.9
Long term unemployed (1 year & over, %)	2.4	2.5	1.2
Tertiary Educational attainment (aged 25-64, %, 2021)	38.1	38.9	39.9
Gross domestic Expenditure on R&D (% of GDP, 2020)	2.3	1.9	3.0
Int. Migrant Stock (% of population, 2019)	12.5	14.1	13.2
Latest 5-year Average growth	0.1	0.1	0.5

Source: (OECD, September 2023), pp. 9-10

The participation rates are two to three percentage points lower when compared to Euro countries and OECD countries. The average hours worked per year are more or less comparable in EU/ Euro countries, but quite low from the average hours worked (1752) in comparator countries. The unemployment rate are historically low at around 6 percent in the EU and has been declining since 2010. However, the high unemployment rates (14.5%) among youths when compared to the unemployment rate of OECD (10.9%) is a cause of concern. Similarly, the number of long term unemployed is also high in EU/ Euro area countries. The tertiary educational attainment is more or less similar in the EU/Euro area countries. The Gross domestic expenditure on R&D as percent of GDP is better in EU countries than in Euro area countries, but below the level of 3 percent achieved in OECD countries. The international migrant stock as percent of the population is also similar in EU/ Euro countries and comparator countries but the last 5 year average growth in the EU/Euro area (0.1%) is lower than that achieved in OECD countries. By increasing the participation rates and allowing skilled migrants easy entry, it seems that employment rates could be increased and long term unemployment rates could be decreased easily. By increasing the percentage of the population achieving tertiary education, the average growth rates could be increased.

Migration Patterns in Europe

During the decade of the 1960s and 1970s, migrants from Italy and Spain moved to Germany. After, 1970s, immigrants also came from Turkey into Germany. Immigration into Germany was also sourced from Eastern European countries that joined the European Union in 2004. A huge influx of two million migrants from Eastern Europe and refugees came from Syria.

The inter-European migration increased in recent years, and the data is reported as given in the **Appendix Table I**. The table shows that immigrant stocks are correlated with the income level of countries. While Luxembourg and Switzerland have a high share of foreign nationals, Eastern European countries such as Poland and Romania have a small share of their populations. Within the EEA, migrants' favourite destination is Western Europe, while foreign nationals living in Eastern Europe come from Russia (Estonia) and Bosnia (Slovenia).

The pattern of emigrants shows that twenty percent of Romanians are living in other EEA countries. The citizens of Portugal or Greece are living outside elsewhere in Europe. On the other hand few citizens of Western Europe like Germany and the UK, are living abroad.

The last column of the table shows the change in countrys' immigrant share between 2004 and 2019, which shows that the immigrant share increased in almost all countries, in some countries increasing by 5 percentage points. But in Latvia and Estonia, Russians returned to their home country. However, it is clear that the increase in foreign share, especially in Western Europe, was due to migrants from other EU countries. In Eastern Europe, the increase in foreign population share was modest, which was due to migrants from non-EU countries. The pattern suggests labour flows from poorer to richer countries, especially from East to West.

The regional pattern of immigrant location shows that migrants in countries of Austria, France, Belgium, and Luxembourg come from Portugal, Germany, Italy, or France. Within the EU-15 countries, each country accounts for the main group of foreigners in at least one region of another country; the main foreign group as migrants hails from countries joining the European Union after 2004. Migrants from Poland move to the British Isles, Scandinavia, Germany, and the Netherlands. The citizens of Romania have moved to Italy and Spain, or in some parts of Austria/ Southern Germany. Outside Europe, the migrants come from Turkey or Syria in Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden. Migrants from Morocco and Algeria move to Spain and France, or Italy. Also, in a few regions of Portugal, Brazilians have moved as migrants and Russians in Finland.

Dorn and Zweimuller (Spring 2021, p. 58) points out that immigrants have increased mobility to areas which already had a large diaspora of migrants, such as Syrians in Sweden/ Germany, Moroccans to Belgium, and immigrants from China to Italy. Similarly, he also points that proximity to geographical areas play a role in

migrant's destination choice- Albanians to Italy and Russians to Finland. However, due to delayed access to Western European Markets, Polish citizens moved to Ireland, Norway and the United States after joining the European Union, but only later on from 2011, moved to Germany and Austria.

New Pact on Migration and Asylum of the EU

The New Pact on Migration and Asylum, which was proposed in September 2020 and agreed between the European Parliament and the Council in December 2023, manages and normalises migration for the long term, providing certainty, clarity and decent conditions for people arriving in the EU. It also establishes a common approach to migration and asylum that is based on solidarity, responsibility, and respect for human rights. The agreement covers five key proposals of the Pact:

- **Screening Regulation:**Uniform Rules on the identification of non-EU nationals.
- **Eurodac (Migrant Data) Regulation:**Developing a common database to detect unauthorised movements.
- **Asylum Procedures Regulation:**Making asylum, return and border procedures quicker and more effective.
- **Asylum Migration Management Regulation:**Establishing a new system, which balances and fixes responsibility for asylum applications.
- **Crisis and Force Majeure Regulation:**Ensuring the preparedness of the EU to face crisis situations.

(https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/migration-and-asylum/new-pact-migration-and-asylum_en#:~:text=The%20pact%2C%20which%20proposed,people%20arriving%20in%20the%20EU. Accessed 31 January 6:20 am)

Before the political agreement was made, the Pact has already achieved various outcomes such as an early warning and forecasting system allowing prompt identification of migration situations, enabling effective preparedness and response, and managing private vessels involved in Search and Rescue (SAR) operations. It has set the ground for the regular meetings of the European Contact Group on SAR, support Member States in bringing greater convergence to asylum and reception practices at the EU's high standards, establish an effective and common European return system and improve the coordination of actions between the EU and the Member States. The members had already agreed since June 2022 to support Member States under pressure, including by pledging to relocate some of their asylum seekers

and through financial contributions. A detailed timeline of the achievements is given in **Box 1.1**.

Box 1.1	Timeline of the New Pact on Migration and Asylum
December 2023	Political agreement reached by the European Parliament and the Council on the Pact on Migration and Asylum
June 2023	Council's agreement on Asylum and Migration Management Regulation and Asylum Procedures Regulation
March 2023	Recommendation for mutual recognition of return decisions
January 2023	Operational Strategy for more effective returns
June 2022	Voluntary Solidarity mechanism
March 2022	A new EU Return Coordinator appointed
January 2022	The EU Agency for Asylum replaces the EU Asylum Support Office
December 2021	Revision of the Schengen Borders Code Regulation addressing the instrumentalisation of people
September 2021	A renewed EU Action Plan against migrant smuggling 2021-2025
April 21	EU Strategy on combatting trafficking in human beings EU Strategy on voluntary return and reintegration
March 21	European Contact Group on Search and Rescue
September 2020	Asylum and Migration Management Regulation Screening procedure at the external border A new Asylum Procedures Regulation Revised EURODAC database Recommendation on an EU mechanism for preparedness and management of crises related to migration Regulation to address situations of force majeure Recommendation on cooperation on search and rescue Guidance on non-criminalisation of search and rescue

Source:<https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/migration-and-asylum/new-pact-migration-and-asylum>

The recent reforms in migration asylum rules have curbed illegal migration to the EU since 2015, when a record number of migrants arrived in the EU. The EU lawmakers are viewing it as a historic, decisive political issue, as different parties have agreed to it. EU agrees that the migrants should apply for asylum where that person first arrive and not necessarily in Greece, Spain, or so on; on equitable distribution of the exodus of asylum seekers in EU countries and finally, countries that refuse to share the burden physically should contribute financially. Beyond that controversy, it is agreed that migrants will be thoroughly checked at the borders, will be separated on the basis of how likely their asylum applications are to be

approved or rejected, setting up detention centres, and speeding up deportations, which NGOs and charitable institutions have criticised, as the exodus crisis will certainly cause members to relax rules. European elections are due in the first half of 2024, and parties have that in mind too.

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz made a U-turn from the earlier pro-refugee policy of Angela Merkel by introducing tougher immigration rules, where it would be easy to deport immigrants. He asserted that foreign immigrants would have legal access to EU's labour market, but migrants whose applications are rejected should return to their country of origin. Italy's Meloni is deporting immigrants to Albania while their asylum applications are being assessed by Italy. The French Senate is also debating a tougher immigration bill. Similarly United Kingdom is deporting migrants to Rwanda. Europeans are increasingly shutting doors for immigrants to outsource the refugee problem. Meloni views Italy as the first port of call for migrants from the Mediterranean and will set up management of illegal centres (3000 people who will remain in centres). These transfers must not become a shift of responsibility as far as refugees are concerned, but an example of enhancement of shared responsibility. But who will ensure that Albania respects human rights convention for refugees? Return rates need to go up and applications need to be processed there and then at the first point of entry. Overstressed countries porting the Mediterranean like Greece, which accommodated the majority of migrants, is of the view that other EU members should share the load or contribute financially.

Migration is the key political battleground, aggravating divides between EU countries. Italy has become the main gateway to Europe, around 1,30,000 migrants arrived in Italy till October 2023 (double the figure than in 2022). Italy Prime Minister Georgia Meloni, in response, has put up a naval blockade of North Africa and has written to the German chancellor criticising funding for rescue boats in the Mediterranean. Migration is a political agenda and images of illegal arrivals are constantly broadcast by European Television. Germany received 2,00,000 asylum applications in 2023 (77 percent greater than the same period last year). Similarly, Lampedusa an island in the Mediterranean, which could accommodate 6000 people, saw an exodus of 10000 migrants from Africa seeking refugee and a better life in the European Union. In totality, between January to October 2023, Europe has seen an influx of 2,50,000 migrants, out of which 1,30,000 came in Italy- an increase of 83 percent from last year. This is a clear indication of an immigration crisis and the

New Pact on immigration is a step in this direction to counter the exodus of immigrants.

Germany has criticized Poland for porous borders and irregular migrants being granted Schengen Visa in Exchange for payments. Poland waved off the asylum seekers, so Germany has to revise its asylum policies. The open movement inside the EU is causing strife and tensions between EU members. EU countries are making it easier to deport asylum seekers to third-world countries. Border checks between Schengen countries, Poland- France, France-Germany, France-Italy are non-existent, and it's up to these EU countries when border controls are introduced. Reforms would firstly require internal border controls within the EU, which are easier for member states in case of pressure by third world countries (Libya, Turkey) and secondly instrumentalisation of migrants. Tunisia is a transition country inhabited by a large number of migrants and the EU must cooperate with the Tunisian government to stop illegal migration through boats. For Schengen countries, there should be a functioning external border, without which internal border control between member states would not be meaningful.

EU deals with the non-EU countries are not good enough. Some of the proposals are good, but effectiveness hinges on the ability to return rejected applicants. In 2022, EU countries gave 422400 return decisions, but fewer than a quarter of non-EU nationals left the EU. Also, often, origin countries do not readmit asylum seekers. Often migrants come to Europe without any identification, often discarding them intentionally, making the process of return much harder. The EU solution of managing problems with third world countries has seen some success, such as the EU-Turkey deal in 2016, which decreased the influx of migrants. However, the deal is expiring in 2024 and must be reframed to protect migrants. Similar deals with North African countries like Morocco would also help. Migrants and asylum seekers' problems can only be solved when this would be viewed as an EU-wide problem. Though the new pact signifies a positive step, it would take another six months in negotiations in the European Parliament and around two more years before being implemented in member states.

Conclusion

The labour market situation shows that the unemployment rate are historically low at around 6 percent in the EU and has been declining since 2010. However, the high unemployment rates (14.5%) among youths when compared to the

unemployment rate of OECD (10.9%) is a cause of concern. Similarly, the number of long term unemployed is also high in EU/ Euro area countries. By increasing the participation rates and allowing skilled migrants easy entry, it seems that employment rates could be increased and long term unemployment rates could be decreased easily. However situation is further complicated by the strong labour market with low unemployment rates and high job vacancy rates. The labour mobility within the EU is relatively low and does not support the reallocation of workers. Then there is also the problem of cross-border mobility. One of the barriers to labour mobility is licensing and certification requirements both within and between EU countries. A more mobile European labour force would help in case of skill and labour shortages. The migration pattern suggests that labour flows from poorer to richer countries, especially from East to West. Geographical proximity and areas having a large diaspora of nationalities are other pull factors in attracting migrants.

To increase skilled labour mobility so as to increase productivity and growth rates, the licensing and certification requirement should be standardized and made more acceptable across the European Union. Moreover, housing and unemployment benefits should be made portable and their duration should be increased.

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Appendix (Table D)						
Statistics regarding Foreign citizens in 2019 and change relative to 2004						
	Foreign citizens in percent of countryspopulation, 2019			Country's citizen living in other EU country in percent of countryspopulation, 2019	% change in foreign citizens living in a country 2004-2019	
	All foreign Citizens	EU nationalities	Non-EU nationalities		EU nationalities	Non-EU nationalities
I. Countries with per capita income above EU average						
Luxemborg	47.5	40.1	7.4	5.5	5.8	1.9
Switzerland	25.1	16.5	8.6	1.1	4.8	-0.1
Ireland	12.5	9.2	3.3	8.4	1	-0.1
Norway	11	6.8	4.2	1.6	4.3	1.5
Iceland	12.4	10.5	1.9	7.4	4.9	0.1
Denmark	9.1	3.9	5.2	2.4	2.6	1.4
Netherlands	6.4	3.3	3.1	3.4	1.9	0.2
Sweden	9.1	3.1	6.0	2.0	0.8	3
Austria	16.2	8.2	8.0	3.0	5.7	1.3
Finland	4.7	1.8	2.9	2.5	1.1	1.5
Germany	12.2	5.3	6.9	1.5	2.3	1
Belgium	12.3	8	4.3	2.5	2.3	1.7
United Kingdom	9.3	5.5	3.8	1.4	3.5	0.6
France	7.3	2.4	4.9	1.4	0.4	1.1
Italy	8.7	2.6	6.1	3.4	2	3.3
Malta	16.9	9.2	7.7	2.5	6.8	6
Spain	10.3	4.2	6.1	1.7	2.1	1.4
II. Countries with per capita income below EU average						
Cyprus	17.8	13.4	4.3	3.9	6.2	0.1
Slovenia	6.6	1	5.6	3.6	0.9	3.5
Estonia	15.1	1.6	13.5	7	1.1	-3.6
Czechia	5.2	2.2	3.1	1.6	1.5	1.8
Portugal	4.7	1.5	3.1	14.3	0.6	-0.1
Lithuania	1.7	0.3	1.4	15.8	0.2	0.5
Slovakia	1.4	1.1	0.3	6.7	0.8	0
Greece	7.8	2	5.8	4.8	0.6	-0.8
Latvia	13.9	0.3	13.6	10.9	0.1	-8.5
Hungary	1.8	0.8	1.1	4.8	0	0.5
Poland	0.8	0.1	0.7	6.9	0	0.6
Croatia	1.7	0.4	1.2	13.6	0.2	0.7
Romania	0.6	0.3	0.3	18.4	0.2	0
Bulgaria	1.4	0.1	1.3	12.7	0	0.9

Source: Eurostat (2020c, 2020d, 2020e) as cited in (Dorn & Zweimuller, Spring 2021)Table 1, p.55