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POPULATION ON THE MOVE

New Insights on Migration and Integration Policies in Europe

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Key messages:

- Restrictive immigration policies are ineffective in reducing migration inflows.
- Efficient migration policies include quotas that attract foreigners with specific skills and knowledge, as well as support for the social inclusion of migrants and their families.
- Policies should promote transnational contacts and opportunities for civic engagement to encourage target migrants.
- Specific educational measures are needed, not only as an instrument for the inclusion of children of immigrants, but also for the promotion of social cohesion.

POPULATION CHANGE - MIGRATION MATTERS

THREE PERCENT OF THE OVERALL GLOBAL POPULATION HAVE A MIGRATORY BACKGROUND. Approximately 9.4 percent of the population in Europe (Eurostat, 2011b) and 12.4 percent of the population in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011) are foreign-born. Throughout history, international migration has played a key role in economic, social and cultural development. This will not be so different in the future.

International migration affects the size and composition of populations. The effect on size however, is limited as immigration is not able to sufficiently reverse ageing and population decline. Nevertheless, Europe's population change in the last two decades has not been led by fertility but instead, by increased migration (see Figure 1).

Immigration diversifies the ethnic and cultural composition of populations. Some see this as an asset while others consider it a threat to national identity and social cohesion. Either way, the effect that migration has on population composition is a source of concern in many European countries. Trying to control migration inflows and improving the integration of migrants have therefore become the two main fields of policy efforts. However, not all policy measures have had the desired effect as recent research shows.

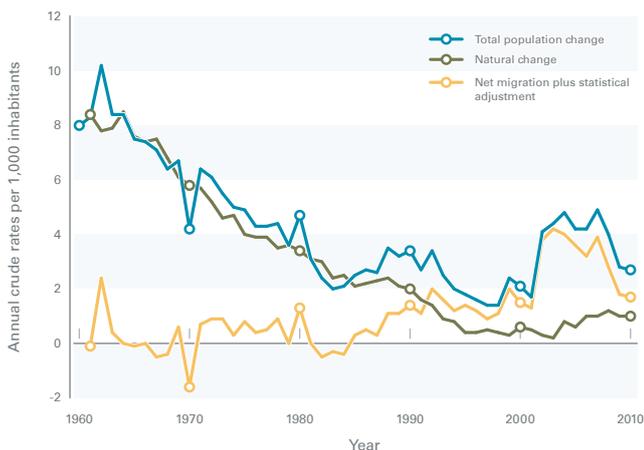


Figure 1. Population dynamics: Total change, natural change, and net migration, EU-27 1960-2010 (annual crude rates per 1,000 inhabitants; natural change: births minus deaths; net migration: immigration minus emigration; statistical adjustment: population change not attributable to natural change or net migration)
Source: Eurostat (2012)

RESTRICTIVE MIGRATION POLICIES HAVE CONSIDERABLE SIDE EFFECTS

THE EUROPEAN UNION HAS EXPERIENCED A PARADOX where migration inflows have increased in the last two decades despite restrictive immigration policies like stricter visa requirements and intensified border controls.

Such policies have mainly been reactive in order to correct ad hoc situations in individual European countries or regions. They tend to be scattered and do not successfully intercept the substitution of immigration channels. For instance, restricting visas to labour migrants did not seem to prevent individuals from using other channels to fulfil the same goals. Instead, they could apply for family reunification and education visas, or use irregular pathways for migration (de Haas, 2010).

In addition, restrictive policies make it much more difficult to leave and re-enter a country. As individuals tend to react to economic changes in the country of origin and in the host country, moving back and forth proved to be the most common pattern in the history of migration. This flexible and circular movement loses its elasticity due to restrictive immigration policies (de Haas, 2011).

REASONS FOR MOVING TO ANOTHER COUNTRY ARE COMPLEX

POLICIES AIMED AT INFLUENCING MACRO-ECONOMIC INDICATORS, as well as those regulating the labour markets, may have had more impact on the size and direction of migration flows than migration policy itself. The development of economic and social conditions in the country of origin, economic possibilities and recruitment practices in the host countries, as well as migration networks, are the most influential factors in this context (de Haas, 2010).

Over time, changes in the national economic structure of receiving countries have been driving labour demand and dictating the necessary labour skills. While demands of manufacturing industries were met by the inflows of manual workers in the 50s and 60s, the growing importance of the tertiary sector has triggered a demand for both highly-qualified and non-skilled workers over the last years.

However, migration is not only a matter of labour demand but also a question of affordability. On the aggregate level, sending countries are those that have attained a certain level of wealth and human development (including life expectancy, literacy, education and standards of living). Figure 2 shows that in 2010, more than 60% of the foreign-born population in the EU-27 were born in a highly-developed country, while less than 10% of the foreign-born population were born in less-developed countries.

These patterns should not only be attributed to economic factors, but also to the broader level of development. A sending country like Morocco is characterized by modest levels of wealth, a well-developed transport and communication infrastructure, and also modernising cultural influences loosening community ties (de Haas, 2010). Together with the relative proximity of destination countries, this has led to an increase of migration aspirations in the population. On the other hand, when income differences between countries diminish, a decrease of migration flows is observed. This is the case for Turkey, a traditional sending country, which experi-

enced decreased migration outflows to Europe at the same time that the country saw a rapid improvement of economic and social conditions.

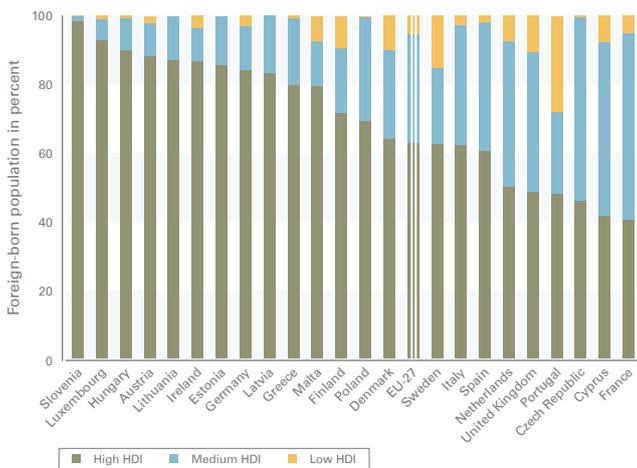


Figure 2. Foreign-born population by level of human development index (HDI) of country of birth in percent, 2010
Source: Eurostat (2011b)

MIGRATION IS AN INVESTMENT - WE SHOULD MAKE BETTER USE OF IT

MIGRATION POLICIES CAN BE USED TO ATTRACT NECESSARY SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE into the labour force and favour a more straightforward social inclusion of migrants. In order to achieve that, they should be re-oriented to a more comprehensive and proactive approach, which involves grasping the diverse pathways of immigration.

Lessons can be learned from traditionally migrant-receiving countries like Australia or Canada. Quota systems targeting specific qualifications have allowed these two countries to boast the highest levels of highly-qualified migrants. Simultaneously, these countries were absorbing medium-skilled migrants as they were needed for positions in less technologically-intensive economic sectors. This demand, for example for healthcare personnel, also exists in most European labour markets and will increase in the future. So, a comprehensive immigration policy should not exclusively focus on the highest skilled, but the entire skill set.

Some European countries, like the Netherlands, have also introduced a policy to increase attraction of the so-called “knowledge migrants”. An evaluation by Kōu et al. (2010) of the policy effectiveness detected that other factors, besides the attractiveness of a job, were important to motivate target migrants. Occupational and educational opportunities for the spouse and families, as well as encouragement by transnational networks, were crucial factors behind the decision to migrate. In light of these results, avoiding restrictions to family reunification and other legal migration channels, as well as

supporting existing social networks of migrants, might turn out to be an important factor in the global competition for skilled workers.

EDUCATION IS KEY TO INTEGRATION

ACCEPTING THAT IMMIGRATION IS NECESSARY AND UNAVOIDABLE, the subsequent integration of newcomers into increasingly heterogeneous societies will become one of Europe’s foremost challenges. The Lisbon Treaty, enforced in December 2009, promotes principles for the integration of immigrants including language learning and orientation courses that introduce the host society. However, these regulations do not always apply to migrants from other EU member states, which still make-up the majority of foreign residents in Europe. If we look at the top ten countries of citizenship that are represented in the EU-27 foreign population, only four of these ten are non-member states (see Figure 3). If we further take into account the diversity of the foreign-born residents of Europe concerning their socio-economic status, qualifications of the foreign-born are, on average, only slightly lower than the native-born population (see Figure 4). It becomes clear that integration policies have to define their target group precisely.

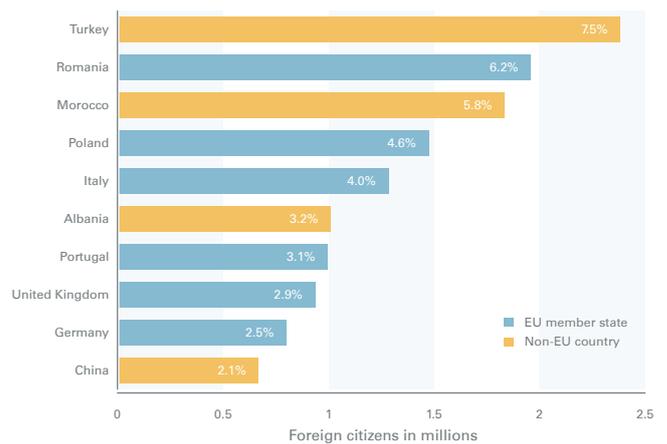


Figure 3. Top ten citizenships of immigrants to EU-27 countries in millions and as share of total foreign population, 2009
Source: Eurostat (2010)

A crucial part of the population to consider in the integration process are the children and grandchildren of migrants, as they boast a growing share of the youth today and will be the adult population of the future (Crul & Heering, 2008). Their risk of failure in the educational system and the labour market is higher than their contemporaries in most European countries. Most of these problems arise from their lower language proficiency, and on average lower socio-economic status (de Valk, 2011).

In this context, putting the emphasis on the education of children and young adults is a key, as education guarantees social inclusion and social mobility. Especially important is early access to education

(at ages three or four), as the longer a child is enrolled, the more time he or she has to learn the language, get used to the system and internalise expectations. Selection to either academic or vocational tracks should be delayed, so that children from lower socio-economic backgrounds can have time to catch up. Generally, increased hours of contact in school or school-related activities can level off initial disadvantages related to parental backgrounds (de Valk & Crul, 2008).

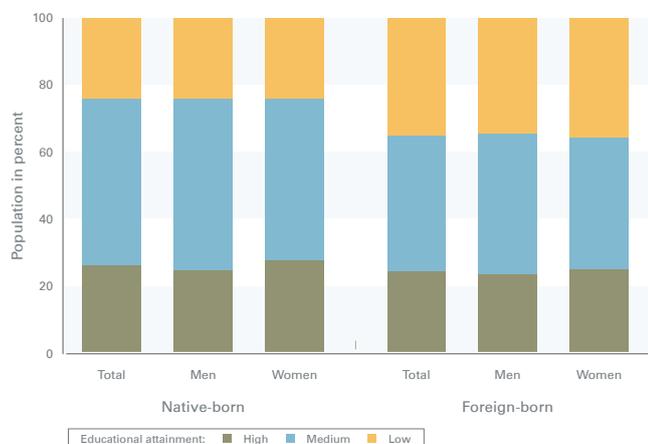


Figure 4. Educational attainment of native and foreign-born population aged 24-54 in percent, EU-27 (for 2008)
Source: Eurostat (2011a)

SOCIAL INCLUSION, NOT JUST FOR MIGRANTS

THE FACT THAT WE THINK ABOUT INCLUSION POLICIES FOR MIGRANTS and their descendants relates to general perceptions considering “foreign” populations as being socio-economically disadvantaged. Although some migrant population might be in worse-off positions, derived from the migration experience (i.e. no previous knowledge of the everyday customs, lack of wide social networks, and so forth), this is not necessarily applicable to the whole migrant or foreign population. Instead, diverse forms of socio-economic vulnerability can be found across populations with migrant background, as well as those with non-migrant background. Therefore, we should consider the more general questions: Under what conditions are migrants in vulnerable situations? Are native populations facing vulnerable situations under the same conditions? To clearly define the conditions that lead to social exclusion, is a key issue to improve policy efficiency. Some integration policies can be re-designed to have general applicability, as quite often, causes of social exclusion relate to socio-economic disadvantages that extend across both native and migrant population.

All in all, as far as there are labour demands to be fulfilled, families to be reunited, and individuals who aim to move to achieve some desired life-standards or to avoid pernicious situations, migration will exist as it has existed throughout history. We should not forget that migration is also a part of being competitive in a global econ-

omy, attracting knowledge and skills from around the world. Policies should consider that integrating migrants is only one aspect of maintaining social cohesion in increasingly diverse societies.

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