

EUROPE'S MIGRATION MYTHS

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FOREWORD



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Migration is the subject of endless discussions. Billboards on the side of roads scream at people to vote for parties which will stem the “flood”. Bureaucrats in Brussels debate the reform of the Schengen system. Politicians lose or win elections over migratory pressure. Volunteers from NGOs go to the border to distribute food and water to the needy asylum seekers. Other citizens fret about refugees they have never actually seen or had contact with. In each family there is a personal experience of emigration or immigration, sometimes sad, sometimes cheerful, usually bitter-sweet. Confusion reigns. Refugees are mixed up with migrant workers from other Member States of the EU, irregular economic migrants with victims of human trafficking, seasonal labourers, and numerous other categories of people who move – through coercion or out of their own will, for economic, humanitarian or political purposes.

Why are we so often confused about it? Why do people get emotional, even hysterical? The subject is delicate as it is connected to our own

identity – who we are as citizens of the EU, of our countries, voters of parties who want to increase our prosperity and provide security against internal and external threats, the insured in our welfare states, human beings with moral duties to help others in need, employers hiring workers or job-seekers, cosmopolitan citizens of the world or dwellers of small vulnerable communities? A perspective reflecting solely one of these dimensions will be, by definition, narrow and simplistic. Our identity is complex and – by consequence – so should be our perception of the migratory crisis. Figures can be taken out of context to support one particular view. Risks can be downplayed or blown out of proportion. Anecdotal evidence can be mis-represented as a general trend. This is a huge temptation for any populist politician who is ready to prey on fears and misconceptions. Any scholar, journalist, bureaucrat, politician or think-tanker dealing with migration always walks on a thin ice.

What can we do ourselves as contributors to the debate? First, we need to base our discussion on facts and figures. As long as we have statistics and numbers, we have a powerful tool against prejudice and irrational fears. Second, we must draw rational conclusions from the objective data, come up with policy prescriptions, adopt measures that will work – decrease human suffering, provide security and prosperity for our societies. Third, we need to learn to talk to people, reach out to peoples’ concerns without pandering to selfish tribal instincts, with authority rooted in the research but without arrogance or aloofness.

This is why the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung and GLOBSEC are collaborating on the exercise to debunk myths about flows of people in the European Union and beyond. This publication is aimed to address the concerns over migration – we scoured the public sphere in search of views and statements which are at odds with objective reality. We try to provide solid ground for reevaluation of some well-established convictions, often deeply ingrained in peoples’ minds. In several cases we only signal the importance of a topic, without addressing the issue at length, in the hope of taking the reader out of “dogmatic slumber”. We hope the reading of this report will be as much fun for you Dear Reader as it was for us working on it.

Wiśniewski

MYTH 1: MIGRANTS FROM OUTSIDE THE EU BORDERS WILL SOLVE THE PROBLEMS OF THE AGEING EUROPEAN SOCIETY

Popular thinking: *The old continent is getting older. The private and public sector will soon not meet the future demand for health and social care of older people. What the EU needs is to welcome more immigrants, who will solve the problem of the shrinking workforce.*

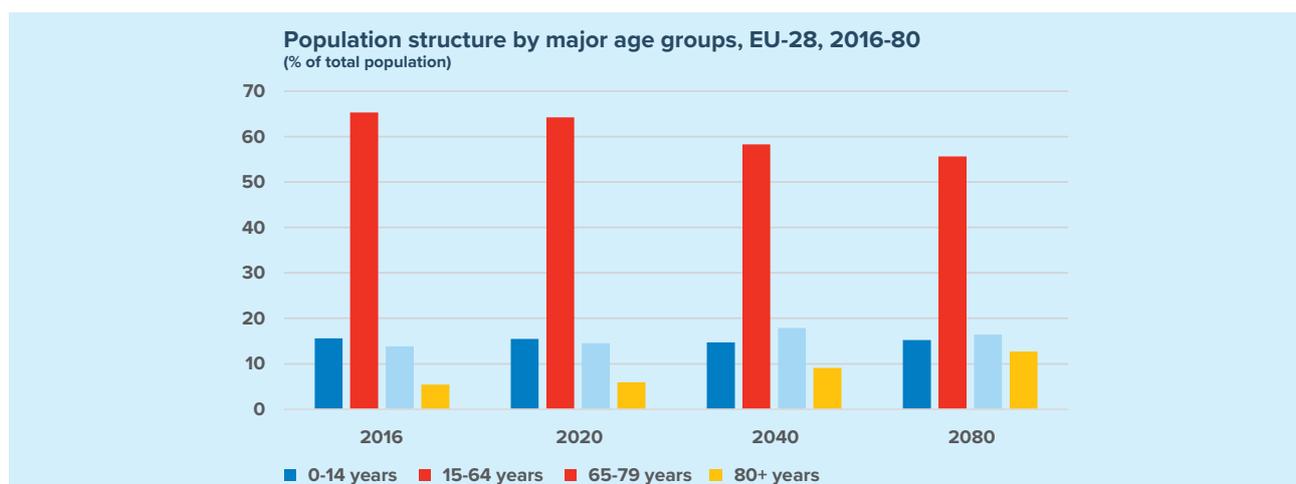
REALITY CHECK

It is true that the EU population is ageing.¹ The Eurostat data show that since 2010 the working population (aged 15 to 64) is decreasing and is expected to shrink every year by 2080.² Furthermore, the number of people aged 80 or over will probably more than double by 2080 (from 5.4 % in 2016 to 12.7 % in 2080)³. Population ageing in the EU is mostly driven by low birth rates and increased life longevity.⁴

Fertility rate

The number of children being born in Europe has fallen from an average of around 2.5 children per woman in 1960 to 1.6 in 2015.⁵ It means that it is below the natural replacement rate which has to be at least 2.1 births (2+3 model of a family)⁶. Today, the highest fertility rate in the EU is in France (1.96), Ireland (1.92), Sweden (1.84). The lowest in Cyprus and Portugal (both 1.3), Poland (1.31) and Greece and Spain (both at 1.33).

Even though, the fertility rates are declining worldwide, in Europe (2015) they have had much lower starting point (2.5) while it was around 5 live births per women in other parts of the world. Consequently, the fertility rates worldwide fell below 4 in 1977 and to under 3 by 1994 and in 2015 stood at 2.45, which still is much more than in the case of the EU.



Source: Author, data from Eurostat⁴

1 Being young in Europe today - demographic trends, Eurostat, December 2017, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Being_young_in_Europe_today_-_demographic_trends

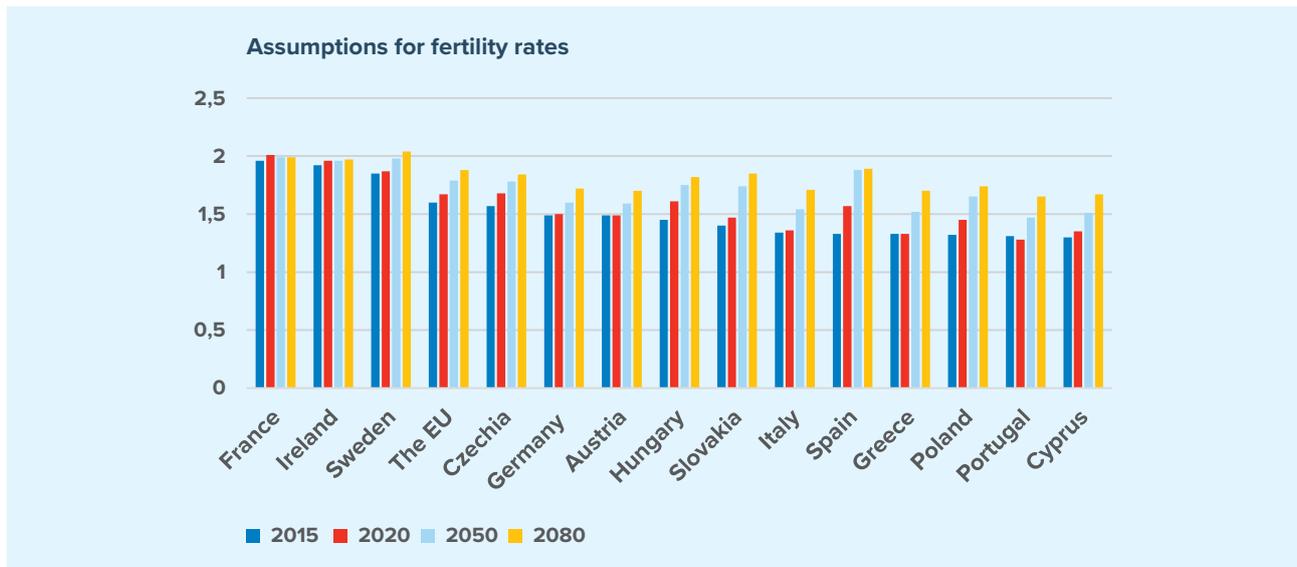
2 According to Demography Report 2015, Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (DG EMPL), European Commission, p.43

3 Population structure by major age groups, EU-28, 2016-80 (% of total population), Eurostat, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/File:Population_structure_by_major_age_groups_EU-28_2016-80_%28%25_of_total_population%29.png#filelinks

4 Assumptions for fertility rates by age and type of projection [proj_15naasfr], Eurostat, http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=proj_15naalex&lang=en

5 Assumptions for fertility rates by age and type of projection [proj_15naasfr], Eurostat, http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=proj_15naalex&lang=en

6 Theory says that if the population is about to maintain itself (in the long term and in the absence of migration) fertility rate (birth per woman) is at least 2.1 births (2+3 model of a family) by D. Eatok, Demographic outlook for the European Union, European Parliament Think Tank, December 2017, [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document.html?reference=EPRS_IDA\(2017\)614646](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document.html?reference=EPRS_IDA(2017)614646)



Source: Author, data from Eurostat

Life longevity

The dependency of old people in the EU28 relative to their working populations has increased sharply. While in 2006 there were 4 people of working age for each person aged 65 or over – by 2050 this number will decrease by half to just 2 people, according to Eurostat. On average for the EU 28, women's life expectancy at birth increased by 10.3 years: from 72.4 years (between 1960-65) to 82.7 years (between 2015-2020). Similarly, for men, the numbers jumped by 10.1 years from expected 67.0 years to 77.1 years.⁷ As a result of the rapidly ageing population, the smaller working age population will not only have to sustain pension and health care services for the society, but also the predominately older workforce may result in a deficit of new skills required for innovation, accompanied by labour shortages and difficulties in sustaining European welfare states.⁸

Is the movement of people able to solve the problems related to the shrinking workforce?

Yes - in the short-term, but not in the long-term.

While immigration from outside the EU may play an important role in the population dynamics, it is unlikely that it can reverse the ongoing trend of population ageing. Therefore, receiving migrants is only part of the solution for the ageing society in Europe.

If managed successfully, immigration from outside the EU may help to reduce demographic imbalances and to boost labour markets, which in turn creates a benefit for the economy. In recent years, more than three-quarters of the total population increase in the EU resulted from net inward migration. The scenario of an ageing Europe and the Middle East and North Africa with the lowest average age seems to have some potential for cooperation across the Mediterranean region. One example includes the fact that between 2015-2016, when the natural population change (live births minus deaths) in the EU was slightly negative, the net inward migration

Migration plays an important role in the population dynamics in the short-term

- ▶ It may help to reduce demographic imbalances and to boost labour markets.
- ▶ It may help to raise the total fertility rate for a certain period of time where, for a variety of reasons migrants may display fertility rates higher than the native population.
- ▶ It may by default increase the number of potential parents.

⁷ D. Eatock, Demographic outlook for the European Union, European Parliament Think Tank, 21 December 2017, [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document.html?reference=EPRS_IDA\(2017\)614646](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document.html?reference=EPRS_IDA(2017)614646)

⁸ The 2015 Ageing Report, European Commission, 2015; Building a People's Europe, European University Institute, May 2017

was key to the population growth those years in Europe.

Migration can also have secondary effects, such as raising the total fertility rate for a certain period of time where, for a variety of reasons, immigrants may have higher birth rate than the population in a hosting country.⁹ What is more, the migrant population being mostly in reproductive age compared to the hosting country's population, may by default increase a number of potential parents. But this phenomenon is often only temporary.

Conversely, the overarching consensus is that international migration cannot per se radically change the negative effects of population and labour force ageing in the long-term.¹⁰ The following factors demonstrate it:

- ▶ Migrants themselves get old, and additional migration inflows can only have a temporary effect on the age structure;
- ▶ Research suggests that higher fertility rate of immigrants generally converge to that of

natives (once a certain level of development is achieved);¹¹

- ▶ Even the record number of two and half million immigrants estimated to have arrived in 2015-2016 to the EU, represents just 0.5% of the EU population in 2016 (510 million), so is not enough to slow down Europe's demographic decline;¹²
- ▶ The migration from outside the EU is not distributed equally within the EU. The preferred destinations tend to be the wealthiest European regions. For instance, in 2015, the fastest expanding populations were often concentrated among others in Germany or Austria¹³ while in 2018 about 75% of all asylum applications were submitted in just 5 EU Member States such as Germany (31.2%), France (17.5%), Greece (9.8%), Italy (8.5%) and Spain (7.9%);¹⁴
- ▶ Finally, European economy is expected to generate employment for skilled workers and see a decline in low-skilled categories of employment, whilst immigrants may not necessarily have the skills profile that the knowledge economy will need.

Migration is no long-term solution for the shrinking EU population

- ▶ Migration inflows can only have a temporary effect on the age structure;
- ▶ Higher fertility rates of immigrants generally converge to that of natives over time;
- ▶ Migration from outside the EU is not distributed equally within the EU;
- ▶ The European economy is expected to generate employment for skilled workers not reduce jobs in low-skilled categories usually filled by immigrants.

9 D. Eatock, Demographic outlook for the European Union, European Parliament Think Tank, December 2017, [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document.html?reference=EPRS_IDA\(2017\)614646](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document.html?reference=EPRS_IDA(2017)614646)

10 Sources used: Gilles Spielvogel and Michela Meghnagi, 'Assessing the role of migration in European labour force growth by 2030', the OECD, 16 May 2018; E. Noonan, 'Migration and the EU: A long-term perspective', EPRS, European Parliament, May 2016; 'Building a People's Europe', European University Institute, May 2017

11 Sources used: 'Mission Not Accomplished', Population Europe, 2011; 'Policies for families: is there a best practice?' Population Europe, 2016; World Economic Outlook: October 2018; Challenges to Steady Growth, October 8, 2018; Espenshade, Thomas J. 'Can Immigration Slow US Population Ageing?', Journal of Policy Analysis and Management, 13 (4), 1994, pp. 759-68

12 Population on 1st January by age, sex and type of projection, Eurostat, 2016, <http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/submitViewTableAction.do>

13 Eurostat Regional Yearbook 2017, p. 39

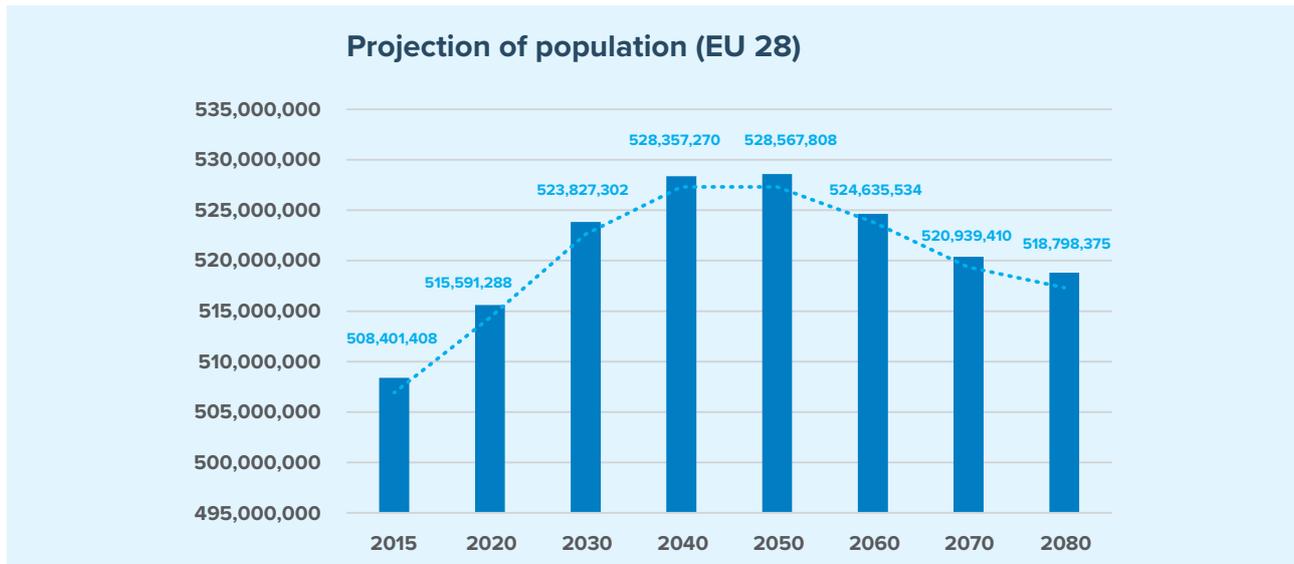
14 ICMPD Migration Outlook 2019: Origins, key events and priorities for Europe, ICMPD, https://www.icmpd.org/fileadmin/1_2018/THB/Migration_Outlook_2019_final.pdf

Projections for Europe

Most models used for analysing population trends suggest that, in the coming years, the EU's population will continue to age, whilst also forming a decreasing proportion of the world population. While in the past, the population of the EU-28 has grown from 406.7 million in 1960 to 511.8 million in 2017, it will reach 528.5 million in 2050 before declining to 518.8 million by 2080.

EU. If managed properly, it could help to lessen the regional imbalances across EU countries and reduce short term labour scarcity in specific occupations. This would require the EU to diligently define the need for labour migration, and agree on the reform that would enable legal immigration and enable organizing and financing the necessary training on-site in regions of origin.¹⁶

Simultaneous to temporary measures, such as opening labour market to immigrants, Member



Source: Author, data from Eurostat

The data shows that on average the fertility rates in the EU will slowly grow reaching 1.79 in 2050 and 1.88 in 2080 (the departure of the UK will not have a significant impact). However, by 2080 no EU Member State will have a fertility rate higher than 2.04. The most promising prognosis are for Sweden (where from 2060 the birth rate will be higher than 2) and France (2 in 2020 and close to 2 in the following years). The least fortunate forecasts are for Portugal (1.2 in 2020), Cyprus (1.34 in 2020) and Italy (1.36 in 2020). Despite the fact that we live longer now, it is yet to be determined if this trend will continue. Only future data can prove if a new trend indeed exists.

Managed migration as part of a reform package

According to the estimates, the role of international migration in filling the labour shortages in the European market will remain modest.¹⁵ However, migration (legal and labour) could do much more to help to mitigate the demographic challenges in the

States should continue to put in place new pension reforms, such as the increasing retirement age or mandatory contributions, reducing pension payments, or implementing a combination of those options.

Additionally, implementing policies that support families would be helpful. Although the interactions between policies to support families and diverging fertility rates do not suggest clear solutions, there are some common characteristic among countries with stable or even increasing birth rates. Those are: a high degree of female labour force participation, family allowances and improvements in job protection during maternity.¹⁷

¹⁵ Gilles Spielvogel and Michela Meghnagi, Assessing the role of migration in European labour force growth by 2030, OECD, 16 May 2018, https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/employment/assessing-the-role-of-migration-in-european-labour-force-growth-by-2030_6953a8ba-en

¹⁶ ICMPD Migration Outlook 2019: Origins, key events and priorities for Europe, ICMPD, https://www.icmpd.org/fileadmin/1_2018/THB/Migration_Outlook_2019_final.pdf

¹⁷ 'Mission Not Accomplished', Population Europe, 2011; 'Policies for families: is there a best practice?' Population Europe, 2016; World Economic Outlook, October 2018: Challenges to Steady Growth; October 8, 2018



MYTH 2: MIGRANTS WILL TAKE US OVER

Popular thinking: *Europe witnessed unprecedented crowds of Muslim migrants in 2015 and 2016 taking over European countries. The “Muslim invasion” still continues in 2018 and 2019, and will continue changing the cultural landscape of Europe completely because as many believe, they are not only intolerant but aggressive.*

REALITY CHECK

There is no denying the fact that a large number of migrants arrived in Europe over the past four years, with an estimated number of 1.3 million migrants who either received or are expected to receive refugee status.¹⁸ Such an unprecedented number alarmed people, and left the image of arriving Muslim crowds in many minds. But it is an exaggeration to say that Europe was invaded by Muslims because overall Muslims are still a small minority in Europe, making up about only 5% of the entire population of Europe.¹⁹ Although this number is expected to rise to 7.4% by 2050,²⁰ it is still far from “overtaking” the European population. According to the Pew Research Center, even if high refugee inflows continue, the percentage of Muslims by 2050 could increase up to 14% of the population.²¹ However, even this figure is far from a majority.

Moreover, growth of the Muslim population is not characteristic of the European Union as a whole, but the percentage of Muslims varies both among countries and cities. Among the current EU members,

the highest percentages of Muslim populations are estimated to be for example in Bulgaria (11%), France (8.8%), Sweden (8.1%), The Netherlands (7.1%), Austria (6.9%), the UK (6.3%) and Germany (6.1%).²² Still in these countries, Muslims constitute less than 12 % of the population.

Local Muslim communities are often concentrated in certain cities or in a few districts in the capitals. According to the 2011 census, 37% of Muslims living in the UK are based in London, making up 12.4 % of the capital’s population.²³ Due to this concentration, the overall numbers may seem larger than their actual share for the whole country.

Sense of belonging

Interestingly, according to an Open Society Institute report, Muslims living in the EU feel a stronger connection to their city and especially neighbourhood they are living in.²⁴ Based on surveys in 11 cities in 7 countries, more than 55% do not feel accepted by the wider society. Yet, when it comes to feeling a sense of belonging, they expressed a clear connection to the country: 61% of Muslim respondents feel a strong connection to the country they live in and 72% to the city. Moreover, in the case of Antwerp, more than 90% feel a “very strong” or “fairly strong” local belonging. Therefore, accusations of potential intent by Muslims for any hostile “takeover” appear to be unfounded given their sense of belonging is relatively high.

FACTS

- ▶ Muslims have been in Europe for generations;
- ▶ The Muslim population has been growing in modern Western Europe since the 1960s;
- ▶ Muslims living in Europe come from different countries: there is no one Muslim community;
- ▶ Muslims differ in culture, ethnicity and religious practice.²⁵

¹⁸ Conrad Hackett, 5 facts about the Muslim population in Europe, Pew Research Center, 29 November 2017, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/11/29/5-facts-about-the-muslim-population-in-europe/>

¹⁹ Kinga Brudzinska, Alena Kudzko and Orsolya Raczova, Europe’s integration myths: A guide for successfully debunking myths surrounding the European Union, GLOBSEC, 2018, https://www.globsec.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/GLOBSEC-guide-for-successfully-debunking-myths_Future-of-Europe-Programme_Globsec-Policy-Institute_May-2018.pdf

²⁰ Conrad Hackett, 5 facts about the Muslim population in Europe, Pew Research Center, 29 November 2017, <https://www.pewforum.org/2017/11/29/europes-growing-muslim-population/>

²¹ Ibid.

²² Houssain Kettani, Muslim population in Europe: 1950 – 2020, International Journal of Environmental Science and Development, Vol. 1, No. 2, June 2010, <http://www.ijesd.org/papers/29-D438.pdf>

²³ Sundas Ali (lead analyst), British Muslims in numbers: A demographic, socio-economic and health profile of Muslims in Britain drawing on the 2011 Census, The Muslim Council of Britain, January 2015, p.25, https://www.mcb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/MCBCensusReport_2015.pdf

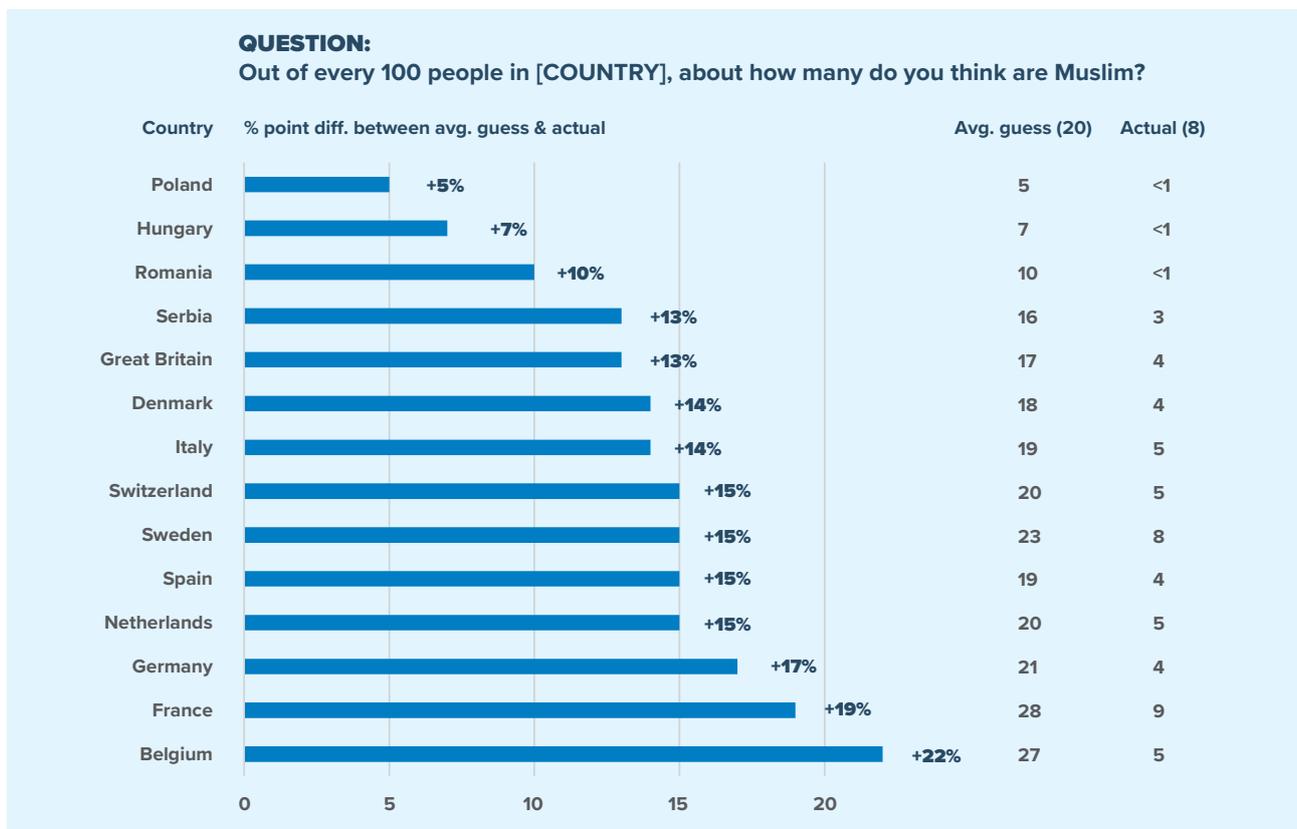
²⁴ At home in Europe project: Muslims in Europe: A report of 11 EU cities findings and recommendations, Open Society Institute, https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/sites/default/files/findings-recommendations-20091215_0.pdf

²⁵ Special report: Islam in the west, The 30m Muslims living in Europe and America are gradually becoming integrated, The Economist, 14 February 2019, <https://www.economist.com/special-report/2019/02/14/the-30m-muslims-living-in-europe-and-america-are-gradually-becoming-integrated>

Perceptions versus reality

It is difficult to obtain exact figures with full reliability applicable to the EU as a whole because censuses often do not include religious questions and are not mandatory. Still, people misperceive there is a large number of Muslims living in the EU. Yet, polls show that perceptions are often misguided. For example, according to an Ipsos Mori opinion poll, people in general overestimate the size of Muslim populations at home.²⁶

In conclusion, evidence shows that no single migrant community is about to overtake Europe, yet such often unfounded accusations are likely to have negative impacts. As a result, stigmatization and negative feelings by Europeans towards Muslims may easily be developed which then can potentially lead to resentment and growing gaps within local communities as well as societies.



Source: Ipsos Mori, 2018

MYTH 3: MIGRANTS ARE AN ECONOMIC BURDEN FOR THE COUNTRY

Popular thinking: *Migrants are a burden on the economy, the financial and social systems. They come to take jobs from locals, or to scrounge benefits, take government subsidies for housing, and put pressure on health services, schools, and public transportation. In other words, they live at the expense of locals, without contributing much.*

REALITY CHECK

Political controversies surrounding migration obscure the fact that in advanced societies like Europe migrants are typically a boon for the economy. There is a growing body of evidence that diversity and immigration drive economic prosperity. The immigrants bring skills and knowledge to many sectors of the economy, they fill labour shortages and enhance competition for certain jobs. Therefore, they have a substantial impact on the host economy through innovation and productivity growth.²⁷ Michael Clemens of the Centre for Global Development, author of the book “The Walls of Nations”, estimates that if everyone who wanted to move were allowed to do so, the world would be twice as rich.²⁸ According to IMF, a 1 percentage point increase in the share of migrants in the adult population can raise GDP

per capita by up to 2 percent in the long run, with both high- and low-skilled migrants contributing.²⁹ This economic growth is driven by the increase of productivity, to which both high- and low-skilled migrants are contributing.

Positive effects of migration are most pronounced when the right policies are in place. The opposite is also true: wrong policies curtail potential benefits. For example, when migration policies of a given country restrict migrants from filling labour gaps, economic potential of migration is lost. Some countries choose to introduce active migration policy to fully benefit from the migration opportunities. For example, facing drastic shortages in the medical-care sector, Germany has been easing the procedures and actively recruiting nurses from abroad.³¹

Tailored policies also help mitigate the adjustments caused by migration effects. Although effects of migration on wages and unemployment overall are small, certain groups of the population can be adversely affected, particularly those who are similar to migrants in skills. Despite this immediate – but not always present – negative effect, the displaced local workers are likely to upgrade to better jobs with

Although migration can cause problems, the fact is while high-skilled migrants come with diverse knowledge and skill sets, low-skilled workers impact productivity by complementing and shaping the environment for upgrades to the existing skill-sets in several ways:

- ▶ Low-skilled migrants fill the jobs for which locals are in short supply;
- ▶ In cases when migrants fill lower-level jobs, local populations tend to move to more complex jobs;
- ▶ In countries where low-skilled migrants fill housekeeping and childcare occupations, domestic high-skilled females tend to participate more in the labour market as they acquire an opportunity to return to work or work longer hours.³⁰

27 Ria Boot and Reinhilde Veugelers, Can mass migration boost innovation and productivity?, Bruegel Blog post, 10 February 2016, <http://bruegel.org/2016/02/can-mass-migration-boost-innovation-and-productivity/>

28 Governments need better ways to manage migration, The Economist, 28 August 2018, <https://www.economist.com/briefing/2018/08/25/governments-need-better-ways-to-manage-migration>

29 Florence Jaumotte, Ksenia Koloskova, and Sweta C. Saxena, Impact of migration on income levels in advanced economies, Spillover Task Force, IMF, December 2016, www.imf.org/~/media/files/publications/spillovernotes/spillovernote8

30 'Spillovers from China's transition and from migration', IMF, October 2016, www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/weo/2016/02/pdf/c4.pdf; Florence Jaumotte, Ksenia Koloskova, and Sweta Saxena, 'Migrants Bring Economic Benefits for Advanced Economies', IMF Blog, 24 October 2016, <https://blogs.imf.org/2016/10/24/migrants-bring-economic-benefits-for-advanced-economies/>

31 Attracting qualified nurses to Germany: Federal Employment Agency and GIZ recruit one-thousandth nurse from partner countries, GZI, 31 July 2017, <https://www.giz.de/en/press/55916.html>

time.³² Policies that foster upskilling and retraining further accelerate and alleviate the transition.

Another important common fallacy used in debates over migration is that there is a number of fixed jobs on the labour market, over which newcomers

will start to compete with the native workers.³⁴ The dynamics of supply and demand are forgotten, as well as the fact that newcomers can in fact create new opportunities in the economy, for example demand for new products and services which in turn can be the source of new jobs.

CASE STUDY³³

Looking at the job market across sectors, there are some examples where newcomers take jobs from natives but do not necessarily have a conclusive negative impact. A high influx of low-skilled immigrant workers in construction in France created competition with the native workers causing native workers either to upgrade into less repetitive but higher payed positions in the same sector or move to other sectors. While the first outcome is positive, the latter often involved lower-average earning as opposed to those who stayed in the area and obtained upgraded positions.

Fiscal contributors

Furthermore, besides benefits to the economy overall, in general migrants contribute more to the public purse than take out of it, with the impact on the public purse on average close to zero. If one counts everything that migrants arriving to OECD countries over the past 50 years contributed to the public system (in taxes, social, pension and other contributions), and deducts what they claimed as individual benefits, in most countries migrants gave more than they received.³⁵

Differences in the fiscal positions of migrants exist across countries. These differences are explained by three main factors: the design of tax and benefit systems; the structure of, and access to, the labour market; and the composition of the population migrating (age, category of migrants, and their skills).

While many oppose labour migration and accept humanitarian need, labour migrants, in fiscal terms, are a good deal for the hosting society. This holds true not only for high-skilled migrants but also for low-educated ones. What defies public beliefs even more is the fact that the difference between contributions and received benefits for low-educated migrants is larger than that of their native-born peers.³⁶ Where low-educated migrants contribute less than their native-born peers, the difference is explained not by greater dependency on benefits but by lower salaries of migrants.

Positive contributions of migrants are partially attributed to the fact that they tend to be younger. Many of them return to their home countries during their less productive years, and hence cost the host country less in terms, for example, of health care.³⁷

In purely financial terms, migrants even drive certain public costs down. Defence spending, for example, remains the same regardless of the number of migrants, with the overall cost of providing this service to the next additional migrant is zero. At the same time, as the cost is shared between a larger number of individuals, the per capita contribution of locals towards this service decreases.³⁸

While many people believe that welfare benefits serve as a “magnet” for migration, in reality, migrants very rarely choose their destination country based on the generosity of its welfare system. The factors that primarily drive immigration are not the relative generosity of the welfare system but differentials in unemployment and wages between the sending and hosting countries, the presence of social networks, and geographic proximity. The effect of wages on immigration decision is, according to some estimates, ten times higher than that of benefits.³⁹

32 Mette Foged and Giovanni Peri, Immigrants' Effect on Native Workers: New Analysis on Longitudinal Data, *American Economic Journal*, vol. 8, no. 2, April 2016, <https://www.aeaweb.org/articles?id=10.1257/app.20150114>

33 Amelie F. Constant, Do migrants take the jobs of native workers?: Migrants rarely take native workers' jobs, and they boost employment effects in the long term, *IZA World of Labor*, 2014: 10, May 2014, <https://wol.iza.org/uploads/articles/10/pdfs/do-migrants-take-the-jobs-of-native-workers.pdf>

34 EEA migration in the UK: Final report, Migration Advisory Committee, September 2018, 6.21, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/741926/Final_EEA_report.PDF

35 Is migration good for the economy?, *Migration Policy Debates*, OECD, May 2014, <https://www.oecd.org/migration/OECD%20Migration%20Policy%20Debates%20Numero%202.pdf>

36 *Ibid.*

37 What have the immigrants ever done for us?, *The Economist*, 8 November 2014, <https://www.economist.com/britain/2014/11/08/what-have-the-immigrants-ever-done-for-us>

38 *Ibid.*

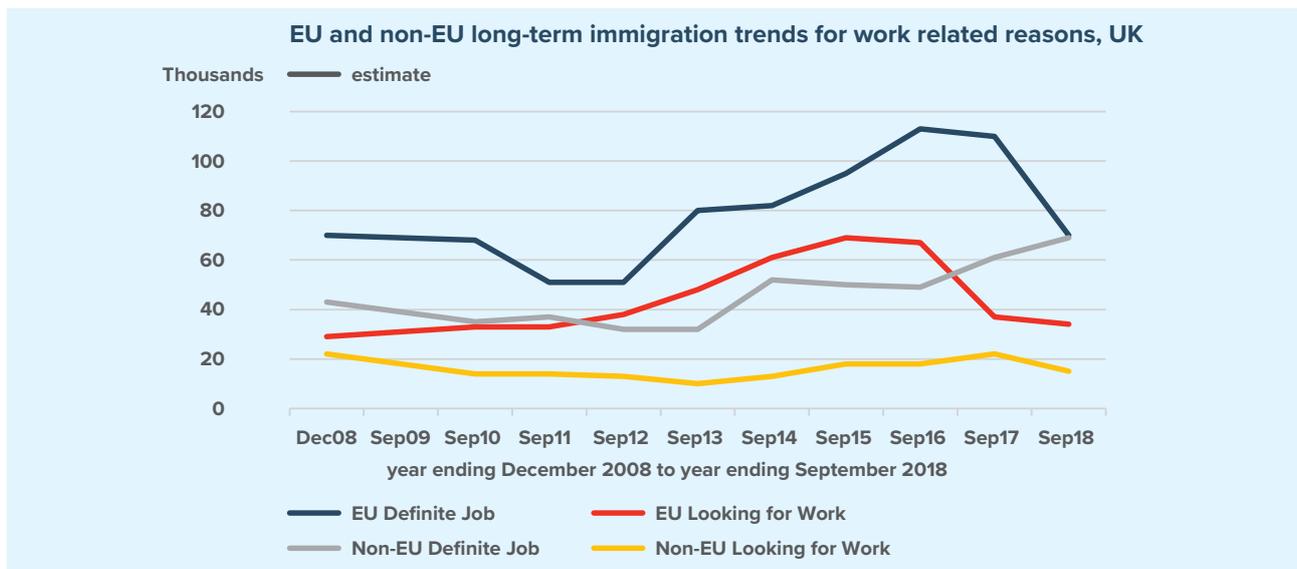
39 Corrado Giulietti, The welfare magnet hypothesis and the welfare take-up of migrants: Welfare benefits are not a key determinant of migration, *IZA World of Labor*, 2014: 37, June 2014, <https://wol.iza.org/articles/welfare-magnet-hypothesis-and-welfare-take-up-of-migrants>

Debunking Brexit and migration

“Migrants” are a large and diverse group, and stigmatization of migrant groups varies across countries – the Brexit campaign did not primarily target refugees but Eastern European migrants.

As of 2018, 2.3 million EU citizens are employed in the UK out of the estimated 3.7 million EU citizens living in the UK.⁴⁰ In 2018 alone, 70,000 EU citizens arrived in the UK with a job while only 34,000 arrived without a job. Eastern European migrants (from 8 countries)

in the U.K. generally have higher employment and higher education levels than people born in the UK.⁴¹ Moreover, looking at the wider group of Eastern European citizens (from countries that joined the EU in 2004 and after), between the ages of 16 and 64, this is the group with the highest employment rate in the UK with about 83% in 2018, as opposed to British and Irish citizens with 75%.⁴² Consequently, their higher levels of employment do not support the myth that migrants drain the British welfare state, including overburdening healthcare services.



Refugees: a different case

One group of the non-native population that is often singled out for the overall burden on society and purportedly excessive subsidies are refugees. Asylum is a status of protection, and refugees do need financial and social support as well, which is the responsibility of the countries handling and granting them the asylum.

While asylum seekers do receive support, the form and extent varies greatly between EU Member States and hardly guarantees a carefree existence. Most of the support comes in-kind in the form of food, housing in designated facilities, or health insurance. But when expenditures on language training and schooling, identification of skills, processing of applications,

and enforcement of returns are added-up, the short-term expenditures can tally to significant amounts. For the first year, the cumulative cost per asylum seeker can be in the range of €8,000 and €12,000, though much lower for fast track processing. The cost also rapidly decreases over time.⁴⁴

Although refugee integration seems costly for the public budget in the short-run, in the medium- to long-run, social, economic and fiscal benefits typically overcompensate for the initial investment. A recent study projects that the integration of refugees that came with the 2015 wave into the hosting countries' markets will bring the annual additional

40 EU immigration to the UK, Fullfact.org, 18 March 2019, <https://fullfact.org/immigration/eu-migration-and-uk/>; Dataset: EMP06: Employment by country of birth and nationality, Office for National Statistics, 14 May 2019, <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/datasets/employmentbycountryofbirthandnationalityemp06>

41 EEA migration in the UK: Final report, Migration Advisory Committee, September 2018, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/741926/Final_EEA_report.PDF

42 Chris Giles, The effects of EU migration on Britain in 5 charts, Financial Times, 18 September 2018, <https://www.ft.com/content/797f7b42-bb44-11e8-94b2-17176fbf93f5>

43 Migration Statistics Quarterly Report: February 2019, Office for National Statistics, 28 February 2019, <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/internationalmigration/bulletins/migrationstatisticsquarterlyreport/february2019>

44 How will the refugee surge affect the European economy?, Migration Policy Debates, OECD, 8 November 2015, <https://www.oecd.org/migration/How-will-the-refugee-surge-affect-the-European-economy.pdf>

GDP growth of between 0.2% and 1.4% depending on the integration model.⁴⁵

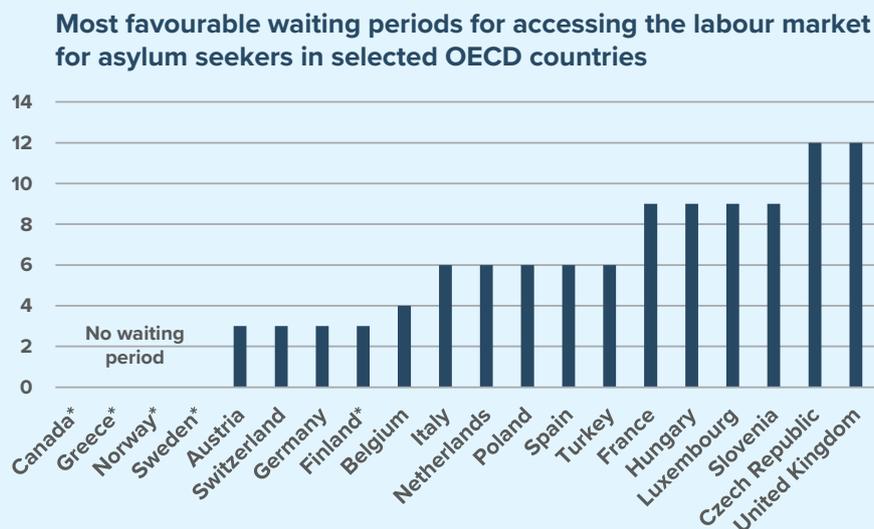
Furthermore, Member States have started or are proposing to cut support for asylum seekers, including countries like Austria, Sweden and Denmark. For example, the famous Swedish welfare system has been toughened in recent years, targeting many benefits claimed by asylum seekers. Failed asylum-seekers are no longer eligible for cash benefits (used to be around \$140 monthly) and housing. The paid parental leave is also not limited: they can now only claim the full amount of full paid leave if the child is under one year old (comparing to under the age of eight previously).⁴⁶

When taking into consideration the lack of social networks in a new country, poor language skills, traumatic pasts, and prejudice by the local population when it comes to housing or job searches, the limited temporal state support hardly makes them better off than nationals in difficult situations even when welfare provisions are comparable to those given to the citizens of the hosting state. A key factor that makes refugees, whether they want it or not, dependent on social benefits granted by the hosting country is their inability to join the labour market.

Refugees are one of the most vulnerable groups of migrants on the labour market. Their work permits in most countries are issued once the asylum request

is approved, and that may take months. Their employment rate in the EU is about 56%, which is about 9% lower than the employment of native born citizens.⁴⁷ For example, in the Netherlands refugees cannot work in the first 6 months, and even after finding employment, the government withholds 75% of their wages to cover for their expenses.⁴⁸ What is more, upon being granted refugee status, once they find temporary work, they are not entitled to subsidized housing and other governmental support, unless they are unemployed. Thus, it is not surprising unemployment among refugees is much higher than native borns.⁴⁹

In conclusion, given that employment is the single most important factor that determines the fiscal standing of a migrant, creating conditions for migrants to join the labour market and investing into the integration of migrants is hence worth the effort – and expenses – in the longer run. If the local population is concerned about refugees depleting the public budget, the best solution would be to allow them to work when needed and to assist them in integrating into the local labour market. Even when this requires initial investments (into training and language classes, in the longer-run) this investment pays-off and turns into a net fiscal benefit for the society.



Source: OECD, 2015 (*Under certain conditions)⁵⁰

45 d'Artis Kancs and Patrizio Lecca, Long-term Social, Economic and Fiscal Effects of Immigration into the EU: The Role of the Integration Policy, JRC Technical Report, European Commission, April 2017, https://ec.europa.eu/futurium/sites/futurium/files/jrc107441_wp_kancs_and_lecca_2017_4.pdf

46 How immigration is changing the Swedish welfare state, The Economist, 23 June 2017, <https://www.economist.com/the-economist-explains/2017/06/23/how-immigration-is-changing-the-swedish-welfare-state>

47 Jean-Christophe Dumont, Thomas Liebig, Jorg Peschner, Filip Tanay and Theodora Xenogiani, How are refugees faring on the labour market in Europe? A first evaluation based on the 2014 EU Labour Force Survey ad hoc module, Working paper 1/2016, European Commission, OECD, 2016, p.5.

48 From fugitive to taxpayer: European countries should make it easier for refugees to work, The Economist, 21 April 2018, <https://www.economist.com/international/2018/04/21/european-countries-should-make-it-easier-for-refugees-to-work>

49 Ibid.

50 How will the refugee surge affect the European economy?, Migration Policy Debates, OECD, 8 November 2015, <https://www.oecd.org/migration/How-will-the-refugee-surge-affect-the-European-economy.pdf>



MYTH 4: ALL MIGRANTS ARE MEN

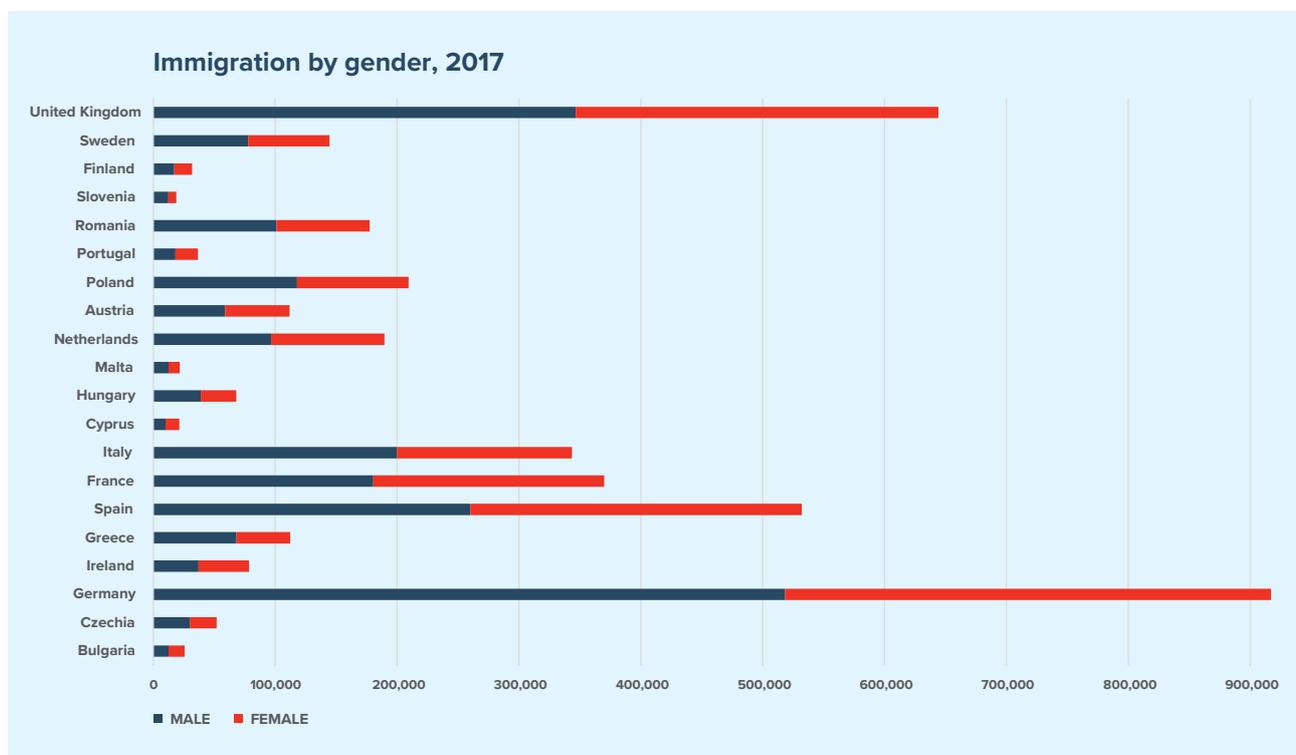
Popular thinking: *After the events of New Year's Eve 2016 in Cologne, Germany, when several young men, mainly asylum-seekers, robbed and sexually assaulted women, Europeans started to associate refugees with young men. What is more, there is a conviction that if the flow of irregular migrants continues, Europe would face a "man problem" that would radically change the sex ratio in some European countries. This fear is based on the perception that male-dominated societies are less stable, with higher levels of violence and mistreatment of women. To put it simply, in the minds of many Europeans, irregular migrants are predominately men posing a threat to the socio-demographic fabric of European society.*

REALITY CHECK

It is true that in most European countries, similarly to the other part of the world, immigrants are more likely to be men. The Eurostat data shows that in 2017 in the majority of EU 28 the number of male

immigrants exceeded the number of females. The only exceptions were Bulgaria, Ireland, France, Spain, Cyprus and Portugal where the trend was reverse. In Spain there were 11,810 more women than men, in France 8,996 and in Ireland 4,207 more.

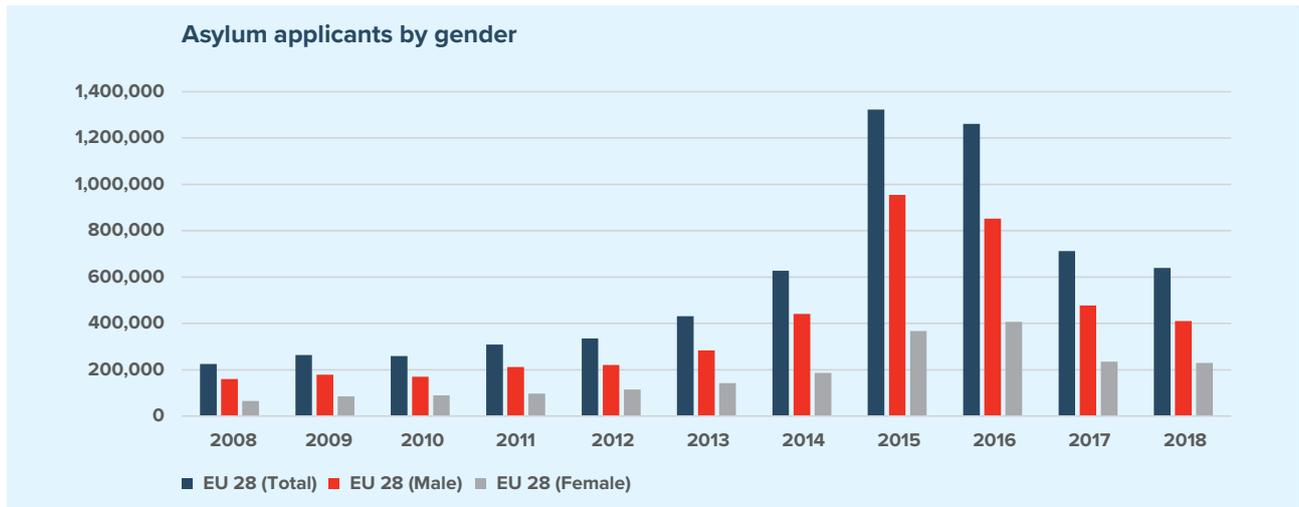
In the last decade there were more than 4.3 million asylum applicants in the EU filled by men, while the applications done by women were 50% less and accounted for 2 million, according to Eurostat (while looking at irregular migration)⁵¹. In 2015, when nearly 1.4 million applications for international protection were made in the EU, 74% of the arrivals were male and 82% were below 35 year olds.⁵² The same year the number of male asylum applications tripled the women's (954,090 males vs 367,460 females). The same happened in 2016 when the applications filled by men doubled (852,395 males) the ones done by females (406,565 females), according to Eurostat. In 2018, 64% of the 630,000 asylum applicants were men.



Source: Author, data from Eurostat

⁵¹ Eurostat, Asylum and first time asylum applicants by citizenship, age and sex Annual aggregated data (rounded), <http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do>

⁵² Roderick Parkes, Nobody move! Myths of the EU migration crisis, European Union Institute for Security Studies, Chaillot Paper no. 143, December 2017

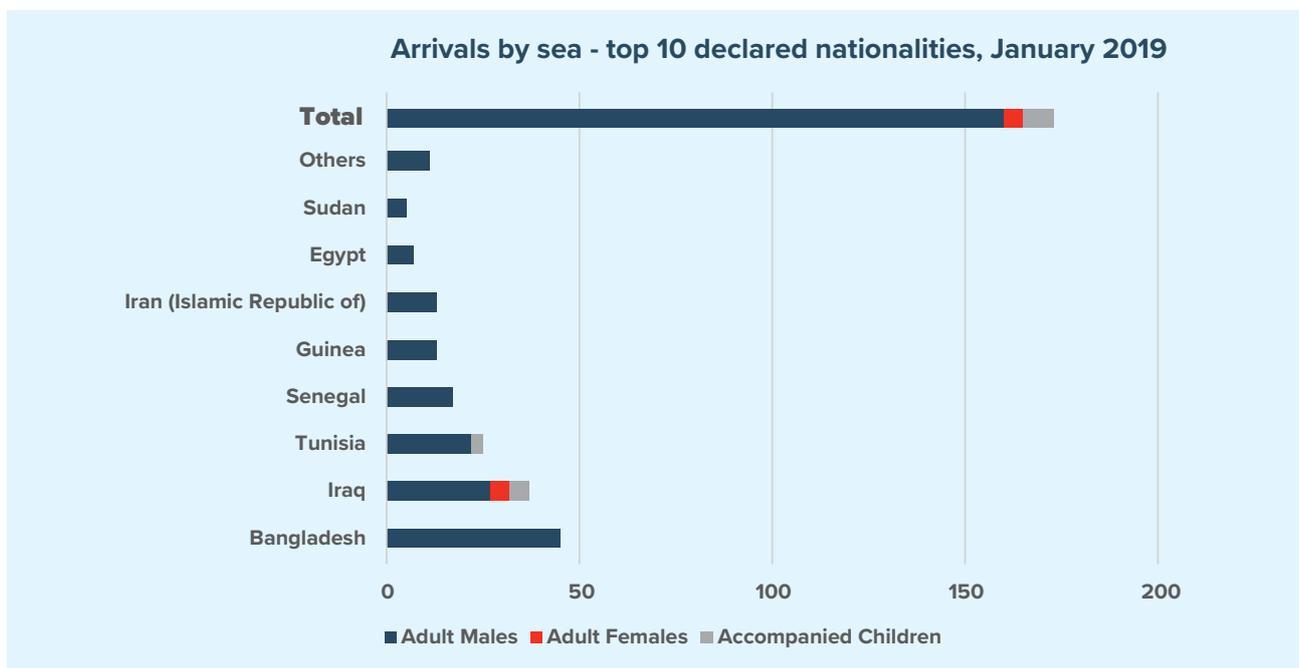


Source: Eurostat⁵³

If we take the statistics from particular Member States, they follow the same pattern. For example, in Italy between January-March 2018, adult males comprised 68% of the overall registered arrivals while adult women only 13% of the total.⁵⁴ Even more men (73%) than women (2%) arrived in January

2019.⁵⁵ The nationalities of male migrants also changed. When in 2018 (period January-March) the highest shares of adult males in Italy were noted among nationals from Pakistan (90%), Sudan (88%) and Tunisia (85%), in 2019 (January) they came from Bangladesh (28%), Iraq (19%) and Tunisia (15%).

Arrivals by sea to Italy – top ten nationalities by gender and age January 2019



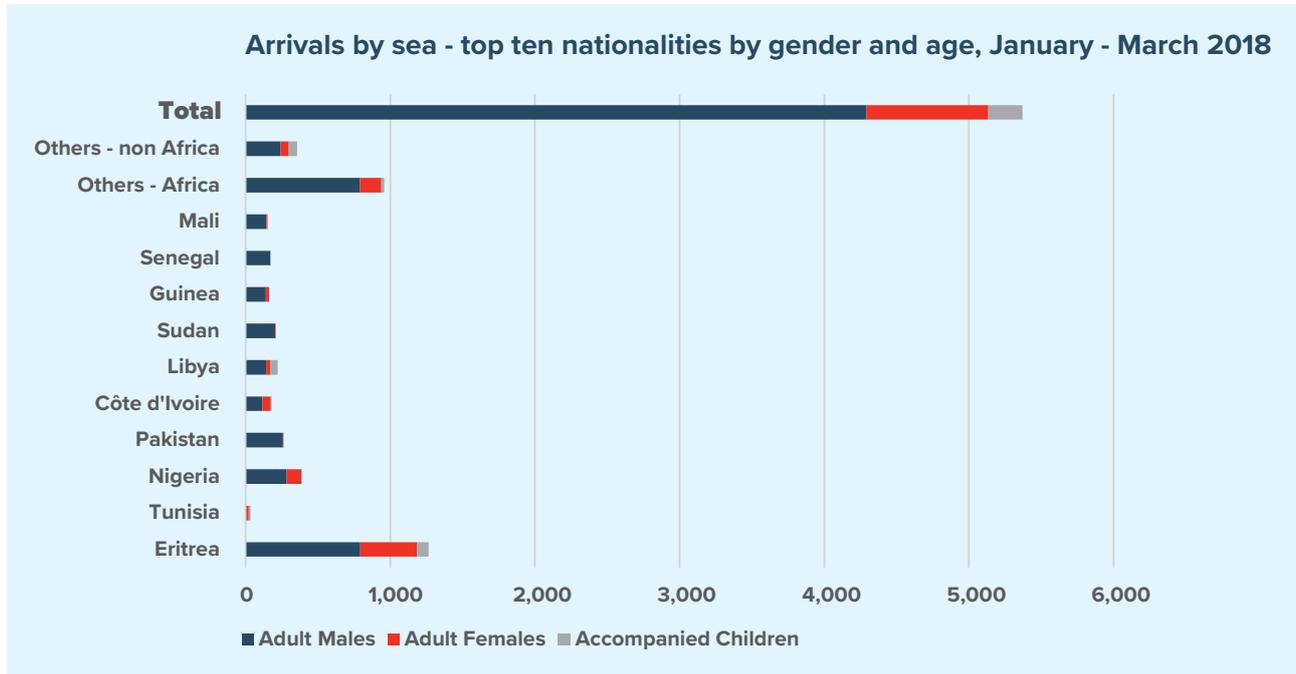
Source: Mixed Migration Flows in the Mediterranean, Compilation of Available Data and Information, the International Organization for Migration, the UN Migration Agency, March 2018 and January 2019.

53 Asylum and first time asylum applicants by citizenship, age and sex Annual aggregated data (rounded) <http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do>

54 Mixed Migration Flows in the Mediterranean, Compilation of Available Data and Information, the International Organization for Migration, the UN Migration Agency, March 2018

55 Mixed Migration Flows in the Mediterranean, Compilation of Available Data and Information, the International Organization for Migration, the UN Migration Agency, January 2019

Arrivals by sea to Italy – top ten nationalities by gender and age January - March 2018

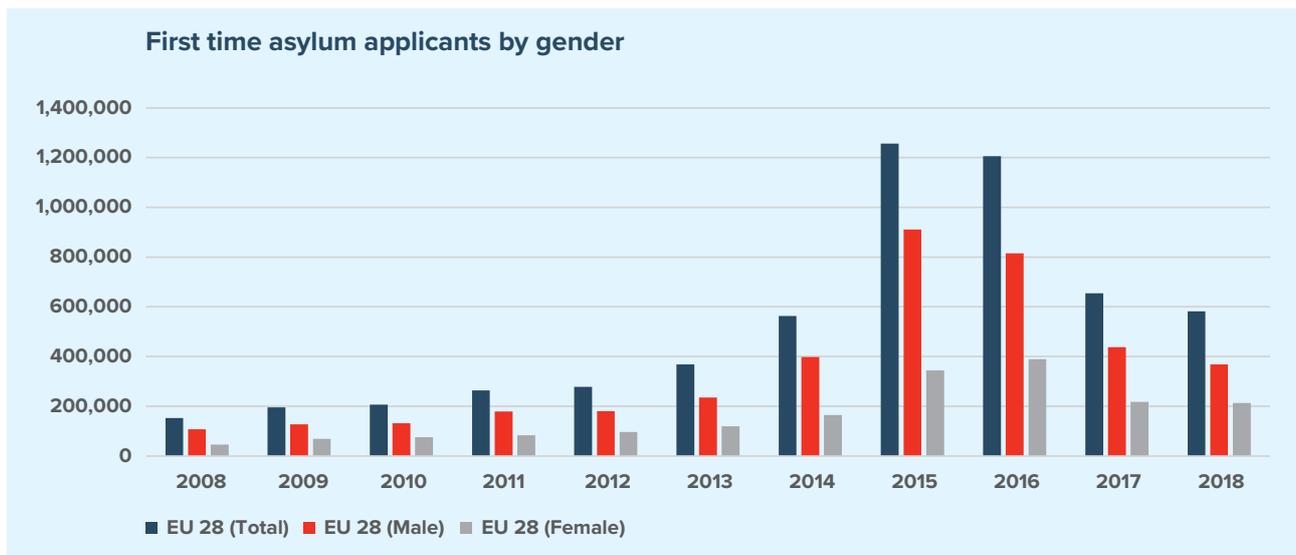


Source: *Mixed Migration Flows in the Mediterranean, Compilation of Available Data and Information, the International Organization for Migration, the UN Migration Agency, March 2018 and January 2019.*

Men are more prone than women to cross borders illegally or stay illegally in a third country. According to Frontex, 78% of illegal border-crossings was done by men and only 18% by women in 2018.⁵⁶ The same year 42% out of those who stayed illegally in the EU were men and 11% were women.⁵⁷

slightly growing over the different waves of arrivals in need of international protection. For example, in 2008 there were 160,420 male asylum applicants and 64,635 females, according to Eurostat data.⁵⁸ In 2018, the number of male applicants grew 2.5 times and 3.5 times for females (410,305 male asylum applicants, and 228,960 female ones).

But if we track the number of asylum applications, we can observe that the share of women has been



Source: Author, data from Eurostat⁵⁹

56 Annex Table 1. Illegal border-crossing between BCs, on entry, (in) Risk Analysis for 2019, Frontex, February 2019, https://frontex.europa.eu/assets/Publications/Risk_Analysis/Risk_Analysis/Risk_Analysis_for_2019.pdf
 57 Annex Table 6. Illegal stay, (in) Risk Analysis for 2019, Frontex, February 2019, https://frontex.europa.eu/assets/Publications/Risk_Analysis/Risk_Analysis/Risk_Analysis_for_2019.pdf
 58 Eurostat, Asylum and first time asylum applicants by citizenship, age and sex Annual aggregated data (rounded), <http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do>
 59 Ibid.

The share of women who migrate has been also progressively growing over the last two years. Currently, women constitute 51% of the foreign-born population in the EU out of which 17% are recent immigrants (aged 15-64), according to an OECD study.⁶⁰ The share of women immigrants increased, foremost to Spain but also to the UK, Romania, the Netherlands, Hungary, Italy and Sweden.⁶¹

Women are also less likely to be issued a decision to return to their home country upon arrival to Europe. Decisions issued by Member States, 66% of men in comparison with 16% women received a return-decision in December 2017.⁶² However, it is worth mentioning that the fact that a return-decision was issued does not also mean that the person was actually sent back home, since in general the return rates are actually low in Europe. What is more, while 55% of men were refused to enter the EU, only 22% female were declined.⁶³

The fact that the share of women among the migrants, refugees or asylum seekers is rising is good news. For example, experts consider that women are an important factor in bringing the levels of violence committed by migrants down as young single men in general are more disposed to violence than women, especially if they are jobless.⁶⁴

60 Settling In 2018, Indicators of Immigrant Integration, the OECD, 9 December 2018, <http://www.oecd.org/migration/indicators-of-immigrant-integration-2018-9789264307216-en.htm>

61 Eurostat, Immigration by age group, sex and country of birth (rounded), <http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/submitViewTableAction.do>

62 Annex Table 11 Return decisions issued, (in:) Risk Analysis for 2019, Frontex, February 2019, https://frontex.europa.eu/assets/Publications/Risk_Analysis/Risk_Analysis_for_2019.pdf

63 Further statistics, Eurostat, <http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/submitViewTableAction.do>

64 Confusion over immigration and crime is roiling European politics, The Economist, 30 June 2018, <https://www.economist.com/europe/2018/06/30/confusion-over-immigration-and-crime-is-roiling-european-politics>

MYTH 5: SAFETY IS GONE

Popular thinking: *Migrants bring crime and terror to Europe; Europeans are no longer safe on the streets. “Crime in Germany is way up.”⁶⁵ The 2015 migration waves have fuelled rhetoric about migrants and refugees bringing terrorism to Europe. Migrants and refugees have been accused of being terrorists, and a wider stigma on entire groups has quickly become the dominant rhetoric that continues even today.*

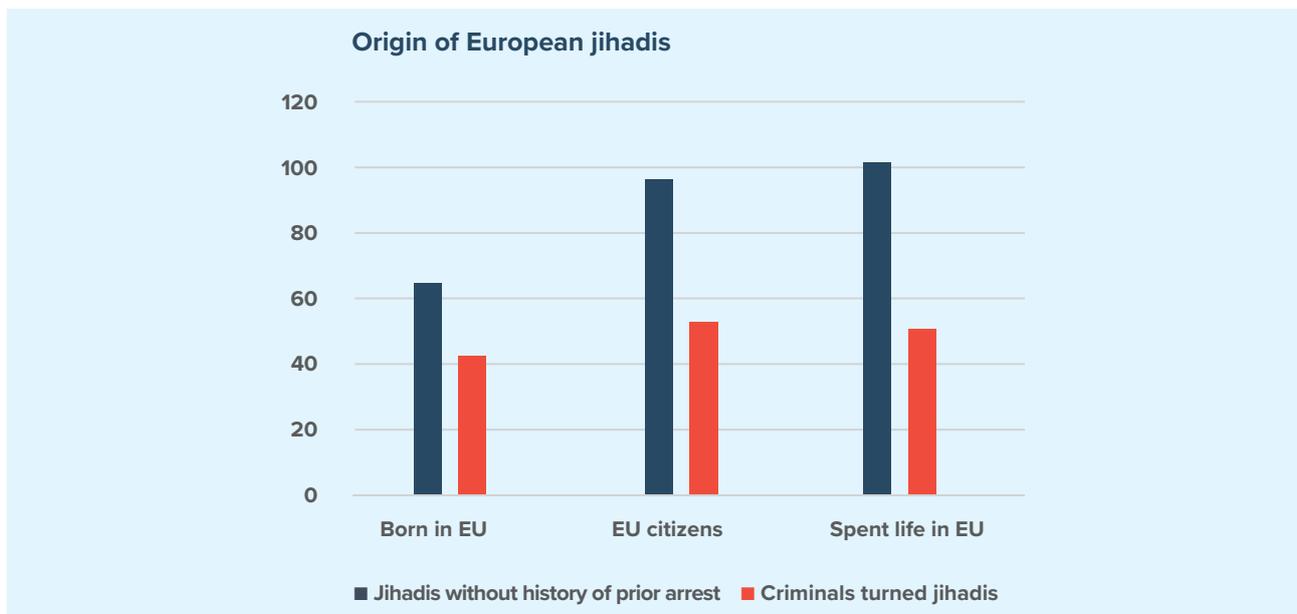
REALITY CHECK

Among crime categories, such as cybercrime, drug trafficking or economic crime, terrorism has been most widely associated with migrants and asylum seekers.

Since 2000 more than 674 people have been killed in jihadist attacks in the West, excluding 9/11 (responsible for 2,996 deaths).⁶⁶ There is no denying of the fact that asylum seekers have been involved in some of these either successful or planned terrorist attacks. Some of the most recent high-profile cases include in 2016 an Afghan asylum seeker injuring 5 people on a train in Würzburg, Germany; also in

2016 a Syrian asylum seeker detonating a bomb in Ansbach, Germany; in 2017 three men killing and injuring people with a van and later on foot by stabbing in London, also known as the London Bridge attack; in 2017 an Uzbek asylum seeker attacking pedestrians with a van in Stockholm, Sweden; and in 2018 an Afghan citizen with a German residence permit stabbing American tourists at the central station in Amsterdam, the Netherlands.

However, such attacks with the involvement of refugees or asylum seekers are rather the exception and not the rule. According to GLOBSEC's latest midterm report on “Who are the European Jihadis?”, which collects and analyses data from 11 European countries with the highest number of arrests for terrorism offences, terrorism in Europe is primarily homegrown because “the terrorists arrested, killed, or expelled from the EU had lived there, often long before embarking upon their terrorism careers.”⁶⁷ According to the report, out of 197 cases, 144 individuals spent most of their life in the EU. Thus, the project concludes that terrorism in Europe is not the by-product of the 2015 crisis.



Source: *Who are the European Jihadis?*, 2018⁶⁸

65 Christopher F. Schuetze and Michael Wolgelter, Fact Check: Trump's false and misleading claims about Germany's crime and immigration, The New York Times, 18 June 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/18/world/europe/fact-check-trump-germany.html>

66 Special Report: Islam in the West, Western governments want to have more influence on Muslim practice with their own borders, The Economist, 14 February 2019, <https://www.economist.com/special-report/2019/02/14/western-governments-want-to-have-more-influence-on-muslim-practice-with-their-own-borders>

67 Kacper Rekawek, Stanislav Matejka, Viktor Szucs, et al., Who are the European Jihadis?, Project Midterm Report, GLOBSEC, 2018, p.26, https://www.globsec.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/GLOBSEC_WhoAreTheEuropeanJihadis.pdf

68 Kacper Rekawek, Stanislav Matejka, Viktor Szucs, et al., Who are the European Jihadis?, Project Midterm Report, GLOBSEC, 2018, https://www.globsec.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/GLOBSEC_WhoAreTheEuropeanJihadis.pdf

Further evidence proves that so far only a few dozen jihadis have been discovered among irregular migrants, posing as refugees, escaping either Syria or the camps.⁶⁹ Thus, among refugees and migrants the found jihadis account for 0.2%⁷⁰ or less, based on the largest 2015 wave as well as earlier. It is worth noting that the jihadi groups did not necessarily want people to flee the country, however they still managed to use the crowds as an opportunity to hide people, just like the case of both the attackers in Paris and Brussels prove.⁷¹ In spite of the fact that there is no reliable evidence indicating a large

number of jihadi terrorists arriving to Europe posing as asylum seekers, the threat has been widely portrayed in the media and by populist political groups. Single cases are massively reported on, fuelling nationalist parties as well as extreme right-wing movements.⁷² This is not to say that there are no consequences of individual attacks, nor should their threat level be downplayed, but stigmatization will inevitably have a further impact on vulnerable refugees as well as second and third generation migrants living in Europe.

CASE STUDY: Is there no safety on the streets in Germany?

How about migrants and refugees who already are in Europe? Have European cities been deprived of safety since 2015? After accepting an unprecedented number of migrants, Germany has been in the frontline of attacks against the lack of safety in the country.

2017 marks the lowest criminality rate in Germany since 1992, with an unprecedented 7,000 cases for every 100 000 inhabitants.⁷³ According to official statistics and factchecks, criminality rate has been going down gradually year by year: the overall crime rate in 2017 was down by 5 % compared to 2016, while violent crime decreased by 2.4%, street crime by 8.6%, crimes committed by Germans by 2.2% and by non-Germans by 2.7%.⁷⁴ Looking at different categories of offences by asylum seekers and refugees in 2017, 15% of attempted or committed murders or manslaughters were committed by this group; excluding illegal migrants: "When it comes to violent crime, 10.4% of murder suspects and 11.9% of sexual offence suspects were asylum-seekers and refugees in 2017."⁷⁵ Therefore, given the fact that they represent 2% of the population in Germany, criminality among migrants in general should not be ignored regardless of the decreasing numbers in total.

As the most recent statistics indicate there is a slight decrease in the number of alleged criminals again in 2018, but tendencies among different age groups indicate that younger males are responsible for the majority of crimes committed by migrants ("Zuwanderer").⁷⁶ According to official statistics, more than half of the suspect/accused immigrants were between the age of 21 and 30 and only one third between the age of 30 and 40.⁷⁷ These statistics are in line with tendencies among Germans, as typically criminality rate is higher among young males. However, between the age of 18 and 30 there is an increased proportion of criminality in the immigrant category: in the age category between 18 and 30 years 53% are with immigration background, whereas regardless of age distribution 33% of all criminals are immigrants.⁷⁸ While it will remain a challenge to tackle criminality among young male newcomers, identifying and understanding the root causes is the first step to tackle the problem in the long-term.

69 Alex P. Schmid, Links between Terrorism and Migration: An Exploration, ICCT, May 2016, p.43, <https://www.icct.nl/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Alex-P.-Schmid-Links-between-Terrorism-and-Migration-1.pdf>

70 Ibid., p.44

71 Tomas Vasilko, Interview with Kacper Rekawek, Bežný terorista nie je James Bond ani šialenec, hovorí muž, ktorý stretol 50 bývalých radikálov, DenníkN, 9 June 2017, <https://dennikn.sk/790757/bezny-terorista-nie-je-james-bond-ani-sialenec-hovori-muz-ktory-stretol-50-byvalych-radikalov/?ref=in>

72 Cameron Sumpter and Joseph Franco, 'Migration, Transnational Crime and Terrorism: Exploring the Nexus in Europe and Southeast Asia', Vol. 12, No., Perspectives on Terrorism, Terrorism Research Initiative, October 2018, p.41, https://www.jstor.org/stable/26515430?seq=6#metadata_info_tab_contents

73 Pressemitteilung: Niedrigste Zahl an verübten Straftaten seit 1992, Bundesministerium des Innern, für Bau und Heimat, 8 May 2018, <https://www.bmi.bund.de/SharedDocs/pressemitteilungen/DE/2018/05/pks-und-pmk-2017.html>

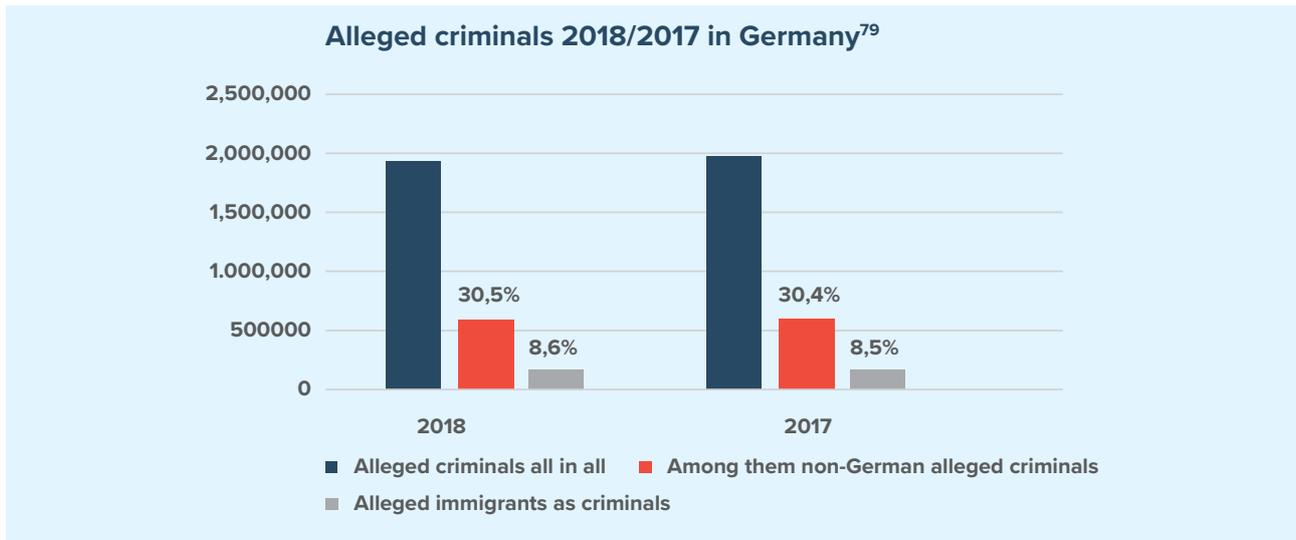
74 Christopher F. Schuetze and Michael Wolgelter, Fact Check: Trump's false and misleading claims about Germany's crime and immigration, The New York Times, 18 June 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/18/world/europe/fact-check-trump-germany.html>

75 Reality Check: Are migrants driving crime in Germany?, BBC, 13 September 2018, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-45419466>

76 The paragraph applies to "immigrants as alleged criminals" (Category 3, Official Statistics, Bundeskriminalamt). Under this category the following people are falling: asylum-seekers who are waiting for their decision; rejected asylum-seekers who should be leaving the country but can stay because of „toleration" (Duldung) and cannot be deported because of being tolerated; contingent refugees; people who are illegally staying in Germany.

77 Bundeskriminalamt, 2018, page 11 (Mehr als die Hälfte (52 %) der Erwachsenen war bei Tatbegehung zwischen 21 und 30 Jahre und knapp ein Drittel (31 %) zwischen 30 und 40 Jahre alt. p.11)

78 Bundeskriminalamt, 2018, page 12. "bei der Altersgruppe der 18 bis unter 30 Jährigen einen erhöhten Anteil tatverdächtiger Zuwanderer (Anteil Zuwanderer: 53 %, Anteil Tatverdächtige insgesamt: 33 %)"



Source: Bundeskriminalamt, 2018

Long-term integration is key

Migrants arrive hopeful and filled with motivation to their new homes, however, if they are not integrated in the long-term, they are likely to develop resentment towards the country and society. They are also often stigmatized and victims themselves, increasing their

level of vulnerability even more. They are more likely to go down the pathway of criminality and often radicalization as well. As argued, there are cases proving the radicalization of numerous individuals in Europe. Therefore, this is a long-term challenge, which needs to be tackled by strong integration policies.

⁷⁹ Bundeskriminalamt, 2018; the official statistics is reflected on in this paragraph

MYTH 6: THE EUROPEAN UNION ENCOURAGES MIGRATION

Popular thinking: *The arrival of 1.3 million migrants seeking asylum in 2015, shows that the EU encourages migration and has an open door for everyone. As a result, it was often argued that some regions were “submerged under the flows of asylum seekers”.*⁸⁰

REALITY CHECK

It holds true that in September 2015 the EU countries briefly left borders open for refugees on the Balkan route, especially Germany, in response to numerous drowning and suffocating incidents of refugees in Europe. However, this period of solidarity with refugees was very short-lived and it ended in March 2016 when the Aegean and Balkan routes were blocked by a deal between the EU and Turkey.

It is vital to emphasise that irregular⁸¹, not regular, migration is the main point of contention. Regular migration is managed by EU legislation and, importantly, by the EU Member States themselves setting out clear rules of who is allowed to stay in their countries. However, irregular migration has been boosted by criminal networks and smugglers in recent years. As a result, EU policies have been tackling irregular migration for more than a decade. The EU has a multitude of measures in place to control the movement of people, including refugee and migration policies, external border management, Frontex and its agencies which were all further enforced after 2015. The asylum system and return policy were also made more efficient.

Despite popular assumptions, not everyone who applies for refugee status will receive it. Only 52% of the total 638,000 asylum applications were granted protection status in 2018.⁸² Many more new arrivals are refused entry at the external border of the EU. In 2017, a record number of non-EU citizens were refused entry into the EU (440,000), the highest

since 2009.⁸³ There were almost 520,000 people ordered to leave the EU in 2017 as a whole; 18.8% were ordered to leave Germany, 16.4% to leave France and 10.6% to leave the United Kingdom; none of the other Member States recorded double-digit shares.⁸⁴ This is contrary to the perception that the EU welcomes and accepts everyone in its territory.

The European pact on immigration and asylum

Formally adopted on 16 October 2008 in Brussels, the Pact on Immigration and Asylum underlines the importance of strengthening cooperation with countries of origin and transit on a number of fronts, including managing migrant inflows, fighting against the trading of human beings and against international criminal networks.

Under the European Agenda on Migration initiative (2015), the European Commission pushed for repressive reforms of EU Refugee Policy. It continued to release a whole set of proposals aiming to further tighten the EU border regime and extend it to North Africa and beyond (EC, 2017).

The Common European Asylum System (CEAS)⁸⁵ is composed of the revised Asylum Procedures Directive, Reception Conditions Directive, Qualification Directive, Dublin Regulation and EURODAC Regulation. These policies are far from perfect and are works in progress. Some of the challenges that are being addressed are lack of documentation to establish applicants' identity, non-compliance by individuals or difficulties in cooperation with third countries.

⁸⁰ Paul Taylor, EU to migrants: Go home and stay home, Politico, 3 July 2018, <https://www.politico.eu/article/europe-migration-refugees-drop-dead-angela-merkel-matteo-salvini-libya-italy-germany-refugees/>

⁸¹ Irregular migration is an unauthorized entry into, transit through or stay in the EU.

⁸² Asylum statistics, Eurostat, Data extracted on 12 March 2019 and 24 April 2019, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Asylum_statistics#Number_of_asylum_applicants:_drop_in_2018

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Enforcement of immigration legislation statistics, Eurostat, Data extracted in June 2018, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Enforcement_of_immigration_legislation_statistics#Non-EU_citizens_ordered_to_leave_the_EU

⁸⁵ Towards a Reform of the Common European Asylum System and Enhancing Legal Avenues to Europe Brussels, COM(2016)197 final, European Commission, 6 April, 2016, https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/proposal-implementation-package/docs/20160406/towards_a_reform_of_the_common_european_asylum_system_and_enhancing_legal_avenues_to_europe_-_20160406_en.pdf

Improving the management and security of EU borders

Additionally, in order to protect and better manage its external borders, the EU set up a new agency, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (30 May 2016), which unites Frontex and the national authorities responsible for border management. One of the key roles of this agency is monitoring and supervising migration flows into, and within, the EU. Furthermore, the European Return Office is an integral part of the agency helping to send back migrants staying here illegally.⁸⁶

Despite these efforts, the EU return rate (the percentage of refugees returned to their countries of origin) is low. The rate of effective returns throughout the EU decreased from 45.8% in 2016 to merely

36.6% in 2017 and national practices continue to vary and do not sufficiently use the flexibility provided by the rules.⁸⁷

Therefore, on 12 September 2018, the Commission proposed changes to the EU Return Directive⁸⁸ and an updated mandate for the European Border and Coast Guard Agency, with the aim of further improving the control of the EU's external borders and fight cross border crime.⁸⁹ It was strengthened in terms of staff (new standing corps with up to 10,000 operational staff and return experts by 2027)⁹⁰ and technical equipment. It was also given a broader mandate to support Member States' activities on border protection, return and cooperation with third countries. The proposed new rules incorporate the European Border Surveillance System (EUROSUR) into the Frontex framework, to improve its functioning.

Main tasks of the European Border and Coast Guard Agency:⁹¹

- ▶ monitor migratory flows and carry out risk analysis;
- ▶ monitor the management of the external borders of the EU; coordinate and organise joint operations and rapid border interventions;
- ▶ provide operational and technical assistance to Member States; support Member States with screening, debriefing, identification and fingerprinting of migrants;
- ▶ support search and rescue operations;
- ▶ play an enhanced role in returns of third-country nationals who do not have the right to stay in the EU territory;
- ▶ support – together with other EU agencies such as EU Asylum Agency – national authorities of the Member States carrying out coast guard functions.

Bilateral cooperation frameworks

Another effort to reduce flows of migrants and fight people-traffickers resulted in the EU-Turkey Agreement. On 18 March 2016, the European Council and Turkey reached an agreement aimed at stopping the flow of irregular migration via Turkey to Europe. According to the EU-Turkey Agreement, all new irregular migrants and asylum seekers arriving from Turkey to the Greek Islands, and whose applications for asylum have been declared inadmissible, are to be returned to Turkey. From a high of 10,000 in

a single day in October 2015, daily crossings have gone down to an average of 83 today.⁹²

The EU external cooperation in migration and asylum has increased considerably in terms of instruments of cooperation with third partner countries and of funds committed. The EU is working with five key countries of origin and transit in Africa (Ethiopia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria and Senegal) in addition to the numerous bilateral cooperation agreements in

⁸⁶ New initiatives: improving the management and security of EU borders, European Parliament, 2 June 2016, <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/headlines/priorities/refugees/20160530STO29668/migration-improving-the-management-and-security-of-eu-borders>

⁸⁷ State of the Union 2018: Stronger EU rules on return – Questions and Answers, MEMO/18/5713, European Commission, 12 September 2018, http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-18-5713_en.htm

⁸⁸ Accelerated border procedures; clearer and faster procedures for issuing return decisions; streamlined appeal procedures; obligation to cooperate to acquire their identity and travel documents; more support to assist the persons willing to return; and possibility of issuing an entry ban (ibid.)

⁸⁹ European Border and Coast Guard: Council agrees negotiating position, European Council, 20 February 2019, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2019/02/20-european-border-and-coast-guard-council-agrees-negotiating-position/>

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Origin & tasks, Frontex, <https://frontex.europa.eu/about-frontex/origin-tasks/>

⁹² EU-Turkey statement: Three years on, European Commission, March 2019, https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/20190318_eu-turkey-three-years-on_en.pdf

place. For example, the EU's cooperation with Niger is helping to reduce the transit flow through the Sahara, with EU funding supporting self-employment in transit zones and six migrant centres for vulnerable migrants, as well as hands-on EU support on the ground helping to tackle smuggling and trafficking of human beings.⁹³

More recently, the EU started Dialogues on Migration, Mobility and Security with Morocco, Tunisia, Jordan and Lebanon. Negotiating mandates have been adopted by Frontex with regards to Libya, Morocco, Senegal, Mauritania, Egypt, Brazil and Tunisia. In addition, current focus in West Africa is on the establishment of operational cooperation in several fields of action covered by the mandate of the Frontex Agency and include information exchange; risk analysis; training; as well as participating in joint operations and return operations.⁹⁴

Causes of migration to the EU

If the EU's encouragement is not the main reason for such unprecedented migration inflows to European countries, then what are the other factors? In the past few years, at least 15 conflicts have erupted or reignited. Few of these crises has been resolved and most still generate new displacement.

Between 2015 – 2017, the highest number of asylum applications in the EU were filed by people from Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq⁹⁵ which further corroborates the link between armed conflict as one of the most important external factors on migration flows in the EU.

In conclusion, it is not the case that the EU is encouraging migration. The opposite is true, as shown by its continuously adjusting and improving migration mechanism. Rather, migration is a combination of external elements such as conflicts or civil wars globally inevitably resulting in rising migration flows, especially in countries near the European continent.

Causes of migrant crises in Europe:⁹⁶

- ▶ War in Syria as the single largest driver of displacement (one in five refugees is Syrian).
- ▶ Other conflicts in Somalia and Eritrea (millions of people were displaced following repression and persecution based on identity).
- ▶ People fleeing other conflicts in Libya, Sudan, Iraq, Afghanistan, Yemen.
- ▶ The rise of religious armed conflicts in Sub-Saharan Africa, namely the Sahel, Nigeria and Somalia, generated increased number of internally displaced people and refugees. These conflicts either have already spilled over to neighbouring countries or are likely to do so.
- ▶ Other considerations such as relatively easy passage via Turkey and Greece to the Balkans are driving this large movement of people. The price of transport has also dropped from an estimated \$5,000–\$6,000 to \$2,000–\$3,000 per person.
- ▶ At the regional level, the reluctance of Gulf countries to host refugees or provide humanitarian assistance leaves those fleeing war with fewer options of safe havens.
- ▶ The instability in the State of Libya opened a new route for economic migrants from Africa.
- ▶ The emergence of effective and tech-savvy networks of traffickers.

93 EU cooperation with third countries in the field of migration, European Parliament, 2015, http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2015/536469/IPOL_STU%282015%29536469_EN.pdf

94 Ibid.

95 Asylum applications in the EU/EFTA by Country, 2008-2017, Migration Policy Institute, <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/programs/data-hub/charts/asylum-applications-euefta-country-2008-2017>

96 Sources used: Lehne, S., Muasher, M., Pierini, M., Techau, J., Vimont, P. and Yahya, M., (2015) 'The Roots of Europe's Refugee Crisis', Carnegie Europe, 1 October, <https://carnegieeurope.eu/2015/10/01/roots-of-europe-s-refugee-crisis-pub-61465#1>; Basedau, M. (2017) 'The Rise of Religious Armed Conflicts in Sub-Saharan Africa: No Simple Answers', German Institute of Global and Area Studies, No. 4, August 2017, https://www.giga-hamburg.de/en/system/files/publications/gf_afrika_1704_en.pdf; UNHCR Media page for Global Trends Report, UNHCR, <https://www.unhcr.org/2014trends/>

MYTH 7: EUROPE IS EXPERIENCING A MIGRATION CRISIS

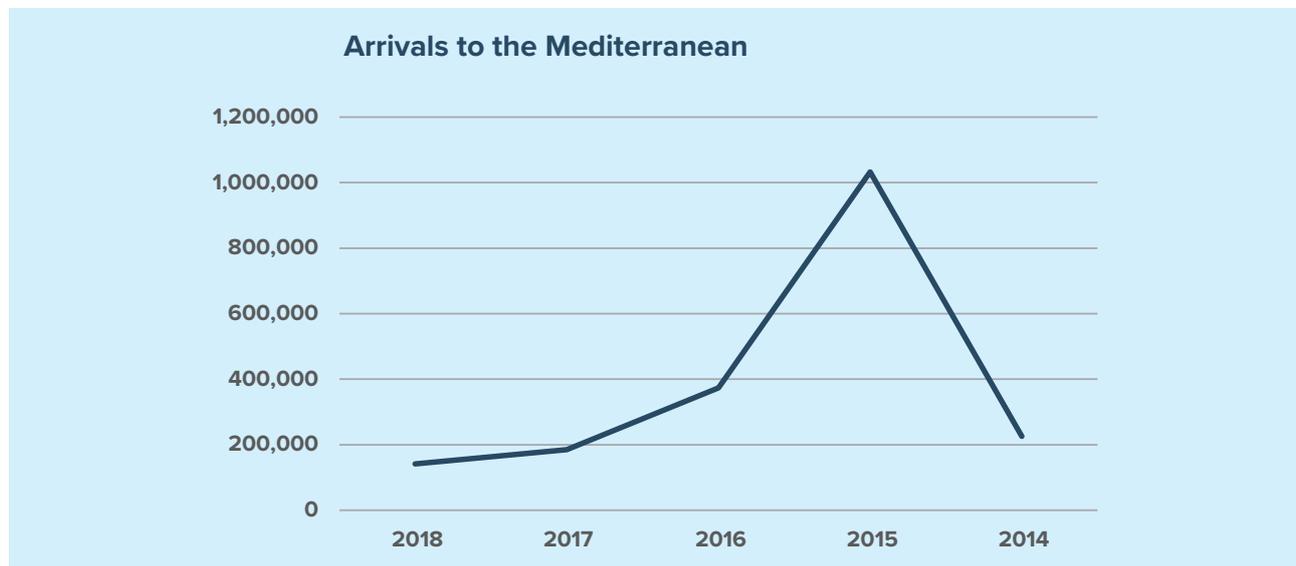
Popular thinking: *Immigration is still the main concern across Europe: according to Eurobarometer it is the top concern (40%) followed by terrorism.⁹⁷ Violence and unrest are fuelling illegal crossings, which we are still witnessing in the latest departures of refugees via Libya. Moreover, some migrants are turning to increasingly desperate measures: 108 of them recently hijacked a merchant ship to avoid having to return to Libya, where an ongoing battle for control continues today.*

REALITY CHECK

There is no denying of the fact that the 1.3 million asylum applications in 2015 were unprecedented for the EU and posed a serious challenge in managing the arrivals and number of asylum applications. However, the situation has changed since then. This

is the first time in the past 5 years with the lowest number of arrivals, with below 150,000 newcomers reported in 2018.⁹⁸ Moreover, the European Commission in its latest report officially confirmed the end of the migration crisis in Europe.⁹⁹

Although there has been a clear decrease in arrivals in total since 2015, numbers indicate that uncontrolled migration is still a challenge. Countries in the Mediterranean have been the primary routes to enter Europe, especially after the Eastern route was blocked due to the 2016 EU-Turkey deal taking some pressure off of Greece but increasing movement on other routes, including to Italy. Therefore, as data indicates some first point of entry countries still face an increasing number of refugees.



Note: data includes sea arrivals to Italy, Cyprus and Malta, plus sea and land arrivals to Greece and Spain.

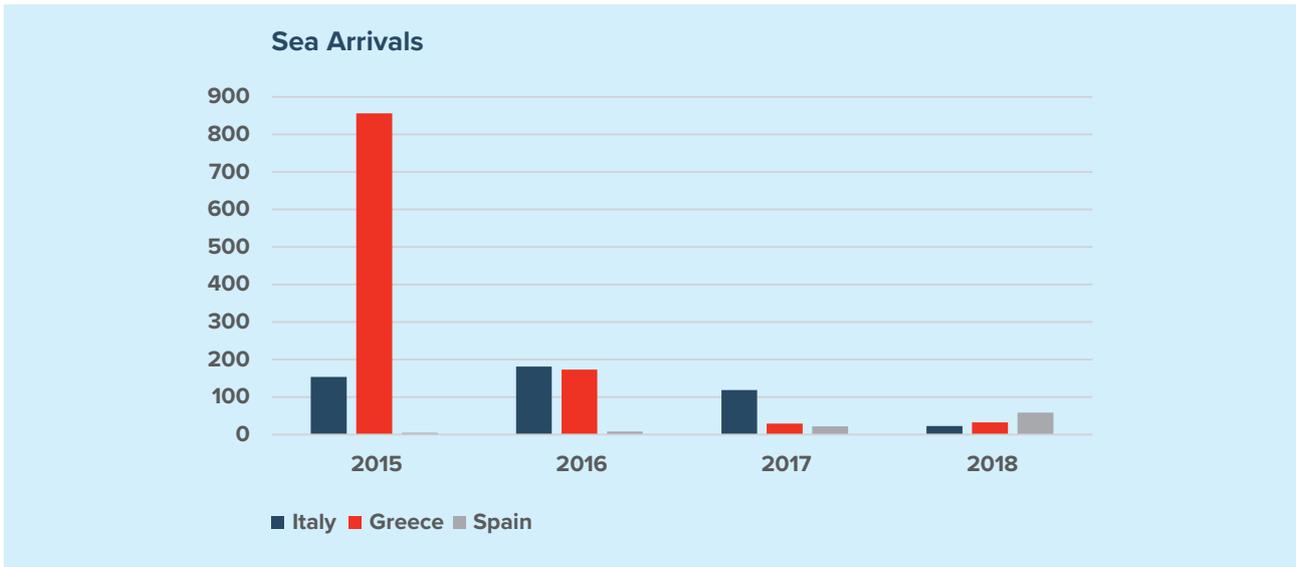
Source: UNHCR¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ Standard Eurobarometer 90: Public opinion in the European Union, Autumn 2018

⁹⁸ Facts matter: Debunking myths about migration, European Commission, 2019, https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/20190306_managing-migration-factsheet-debunking-myths-about-migration_en.pdf

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Mediterranean situation, UNHCR, https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean#_ga=2.77333269.1489999958.1556808322-1154818739.1553270751



Source: UNHCR¹⁰¹

Italy is also an example of a destination country which received an increasing number of asylum applications in 2015, 2016 and 2017 as well. Countries of first point of entry, like Greece and Italy are not necessarily the target destination for refugees and migrants, which explains asylum applications to countries like Sweden or Germany without direct connection to refugee routes. Germany has become the famous example of relieving pressure from the rest of the member states by accepting an

unprecedented number of refugees following the 2015 refugee influx.

However, as the numbers demonstrate, asylum applications in the European Union have considerably decreased by 2017, moreover in total 10% fewer applications were received in 2018 in comparison to 2017.¹⁰²

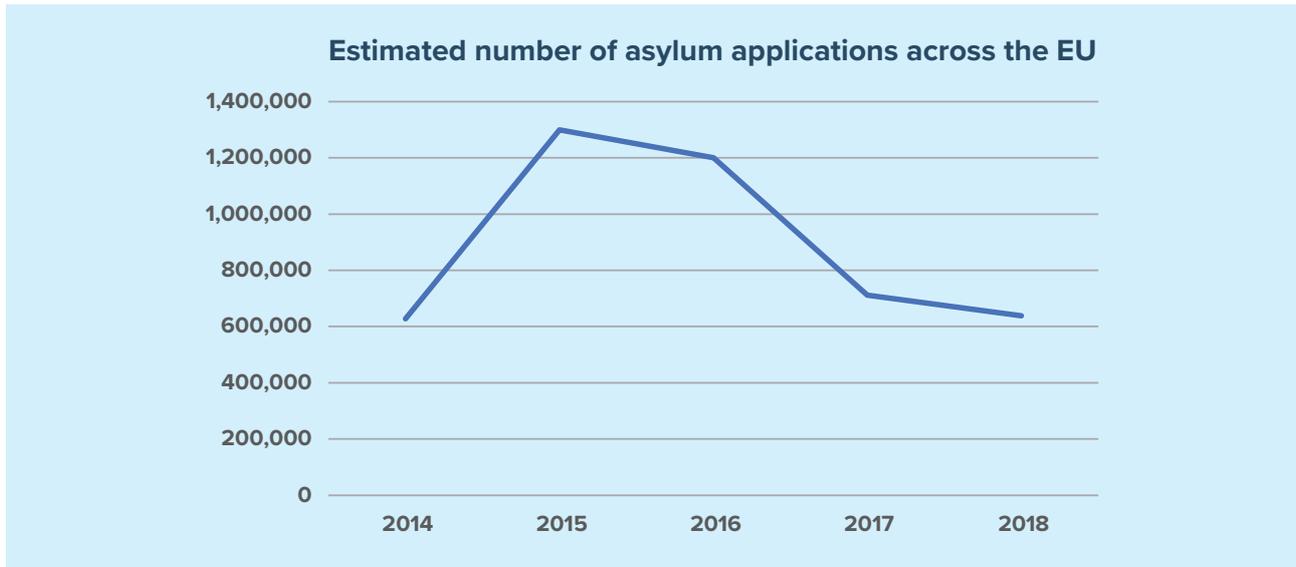


Source: European Parliament¹⁰³

101 Country data collected from: UNHCR, <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean/location/5205>

102 EASOEU+ asylum trends 2018 overview, EASO, 13 February 2019, <https://www.easo.europa.eu/sites/default/files/EASO-2018-EU-Asylum-Trends-Overview.pdf>

103 A welcoming Europe?, Data used from UNHCR and Eurostat, European Parliament, http://www.europarl.europa.eu/external/html/welcomingeurope/default_en.htm



Source: Eurostat¹⁰⁴

Therefore, while the total number of arrivals demonstrate that Europe is no longer in crisis mode, it has to be acknowledged that countries on the periphery, especially the Mediterranean countries, are still facing challenges because they remain on the frontline of new arrivals, and managing the new arrivals is still a challenge regardless of the decreasing numbers.

In conclusion, while the crisis of numbers is over, Europe is still facing challenges that require attention on both EU- as well as Member State-level. Such challenges are often systemic, therefore require a solution on an EU-level. Nevertheless, the delay in addressing and solving problems in the system may create further political turmoil, which has been witnessed in the past couple of years. There is already a lack of trust in the system, therefore, addressing the challenges related to migration and the asylum system in particular, as well as offering viable solutions shall remain priority for years to come.





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