



REPORT

What Kind of Migration for Europe? The Big Picture for the EU and its Member States

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Welcoming remarks:

Tomi Huhtanen- Executive Director, Martens Centre

Discussants:

Rainer Münz- Senior Research Associate, Martens Centre; Visiting Professor, Central European University, Vienna

Jemal Yaryyeva- Data Analyst, Austrian Integration Fund, Vienna

Loránt Vincze- Member of European Parliament, EPP

Nicolas Pouvreau-Monti- Director, Observatory for Migration and Demography, Paris

Moderator:

Vít Novotný- Senior Research Officer, Martens Centre

Paper launch: *“What Kind of Migration for Europe? The Big Picture for the EU and its Member States”*

Introduction to Immigration Debate and the Martens Centre Paper

- The discussion opened by setting the context for immigration as a focal issue within Europe, exacerbated by recent events and elections, particularly in the United States, where migration was central. The Martens Centre paper highlights fact-based analysis, attempting to provide objective insights into migration issues, particularly within the EU.

Overview of Immigration Trends in the EU

- The EU has seen significant migration influxes, with around 70 million people currently residing outside their country of birth within Europe, and a notable portion of these individuals are from non-EU countries.
- Immigration pathways include humanitarian protection (asylum seekers, displaced persons), family reunification, and labour-based immigration. Family reunification and humanitarian protection make up the majority, with labour-based migration comprising a smaller fraction.

Challenges and Shifts in Migration Policy

- The recent increase in labour migration and family reunification cases was highlighted. The policy focus now includes managing illegal immigration while attracting skilled labour due to Europe’s demographic challenges and ageing population.



- Several EU countries have traditionally relied on humanitarian and family reunification as primary channels for migration, though there is a rising need to address labour market demands through skilled immigration.

Demographic and Labor Market Implications

- Europe faces a pressing demographic challenge with the ageing workforce, particularly the retirement of the baby-boomer generation. Immigration is seen as a potential solution to fill gaps, especially in sectors like construction and healthcare.
- Labour migrants tend to integrate into the workforce more rapidly than humanitarian and family-based migrants, who may take a decade or more to achieve similar employment levels as EU nationals.

National Perspectives on Migration

- **Romania:** Increasingly a destination for labour migrants, primarily from countries like Nepal, Turkey, and Sri Lanka, filling gaps in construction and hospitality. This represents a shift in Central and Eastern Europe, with countries like Poland and the Czech Republic also experiencing growing labour-based immigration.
- **France:** France's migration policy historically includes a high proportion of family reunification and asylum-based immigration, with integration challenges leading to high poverty rates and low employment among non-EU nationals. This has made immigration a critical topic in French politics, with public support for more restrictive policies.

EU and National Policy Proposals

- **External Border Protection:** Emphasis on strengthening Frontex, securing external borders, and increasing internal coordination among EU countries to manage illegal immigration.
- **Revised Asylum Procedures:** Suggestions for pre-screening and processing applications outside the EU, particularly in embassies, to alleviate pressures at EU borders and provide a safer, more regulated pathway.
- **Migration Partnerships:** Proposed partnerships with neighbouring countries for cooperation on migration, including agreements with Turkey, Tunisia, Egypt, and other regions to manage migration flow and support economic stability.
- **Return and Reintegration Programs:** Enhancing return policies for migrants not granted asylum, with proposals for more efficient administrative processes to improve deportation rates and reduce backlogs.

Integration Challenges and Public Perception

- Integration remains a key challenge, especially for humanitarian and family-based immigrants, with longer-term dependence on welfare observed among these groups.
- There is also a public perception divide, with positive responses to Ukrainian refugees due to shared cultural ties and geopolitical circumstances, contrasting with the cautious or



resistant attitudes toward other migrant groups, often linked to security concerns and cultural integration issues.

Educational Pathways and Skilled Immigration

- A significant opportunity lies in attracting students from outside the EU who may stay after graduation, bringing advanced skills to the labour market. The need for improved educational integration programs to retain and support this population was underscored as part of a potential skilled workforce solution.

Conclusion

The panel highlighted the urgent need for nuanced EU migration policies balancing humanitarian responsibilities with economic needs. The challenges of integration, labour market participation, and shifting public perceptions underscore the complexity of EU immigration policy. Effective solutions may require a mix of robust border security, streamlined asylum processes, targeted labour migration, and enhanced integration strategies to ensure immigrants contribute positively to European societies.