

ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS OF THE NEW MIGRATION WAVE IN EUROPE

Irina Ionescu; Larisa Luchian

Doctoral School of Economics and Business Administration (Department of Economics, "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University), Iași, Romania

Jarulzica@yahoo.com

Luchian_larisa@yahoo.com

Abstract: *The new European migration wave poses extreme consequences for the balance of the European Union, as it was showed by the last trimester of 2015 and the first trimester of 2016. The German politic, unanimously adopted by all state members, is seeing some serious cracks, especially in economic terms. This paper aims to look at the real economic implications the migration wave has upon the European Union and determine whether the influence of such a high number of migrants might help the Union diminish its economic debts or, on the contrary, will most likely pose a threat to the system. The extensive literature in the field is highly up to date, which determines the research process to be one relevant for future inquiries. Already, Europe finds itself in one of the most risky situations after the World War II – protecting its borders from the outside, as well as from the inside. Latest terrorist attacks that took place in Europe (in Paris two times, in Ankara, as well as in Brussels) confirm that the continent is on the verge of losing the fight against terrorism, as the phenomenon seems to already propagate within its own foreign communities. The latest terrorism actions were conducted by European citizens of foreign ethnicity, which can only make one wonder what will the main effect of embracing even larger foreign communities of migrants, within the heart of Europe, be in the upcoming years. The paper will also look closely at one of the most foreseen negative effect of massive migration in Europe – the possible resurgence of terrorism in the area. Albeit the differences between various European communities is striking, European authorities must find a way to determine everyone cope as one, or else the future of the European Union's borders as they are today is in danger. The qualitative methodology used in the present article focuses on a relevant literature, as well as specific data received and interpreted from reliable first-party sources: International Monetary Fund, Eurostat, Global Terrorism Index, Global Terrorism Database, OECD, etc.*

Keywords: migrants; European Union; economy; terrorism; economic implications.

JEL classification: F51; J15

1. Introduction

Migration waves represent a common effect of the 21st century globalisation process, as well as a rather encountered phenomenon, especially during and after the World War II. The market liberalization within the European Union determined, in the present era, around 27 million foreign nationals to live in the most developed 15 European countries (Kerr & Kerr, 2011). The largest migration comes from North African countries, Pakistan, Turkey, and India, with foreign citizens mostly residing in France, Spain, Germany, Austria, and the UK.

However, the “Arab Spring” began in 2010 brings a whole new type of migration waves into discussion, as civil wars deepen in conflict zones like Syria and Iraq. Moreover, the imminent terrorist menaces coming from extremist organisations such as the Islamic State or the Boko Haram changed the population dynamic, around the globe, in the past five years. Being in a permanent state of fear and anxiety, hundreds of thousands of people from the MENA region (Middle-East and North Africa) decided to “go west” with a clear purpose: arrive to a wealthy European state. The debates regarding a possible refugee exodus coming to Europe have become quite steamy, ever since the “first wave” of migrants forced the borders of France and illegally passed to the United Kingdom, in the summer of 2015.

The newest and most delicate problem Europe is confronting with nowadays was vastly debated, both by European authorities, as well as international organizations such as United Nations. According to Eurostat data (extracted on September 16th, 2015), the number of persons seeking asylum in the EU-28 countries rose up to 85% in the second trimester of 2015, as compared to the same period from 2014 (Eurostat, 2015). As reported in spring 2016 (Eurostat), a record number of 1.2 million people applied for asylum in European countries, in 2015 alone. Syrians, Afghans and Iraqis represent the main citizens that looked for protection in the European countries, as they were trying to make their way to the Promised Land of Germany. Data from the same report shows that around 363,000 Syrians arrived to Europe applying for asylum, while Afghans counted for more than 178,000. Migrants originating from Kosovo, Albania, Pakistan, Eritrea, Nigeria and Iran also arrived to Europe, seeking the refugee status or simply illegally pushing the continent’s boarders by sea or by land.

An interesting dynamic strategy of the migrants requesting asylum in Europe is that they focus on countries that already have large ethnic minorities, like Spain and France. Spain counts for over 800,000 legal Moroccans, making the North-African nation the second largest foreign community, after Romanians. Moreover, taking into consideration France’s large ex-colonies throughout the world, it is estimated that approximately 12 million now-French citizens come from different ethnic groups (Algerians, Moroccans, Tunisians and Turks) (French National Statistic Institute, 2008).

The European Council on Refugees and Exiles, along with other treaties signed by all EU-28 countries, claims that Germany hosted, in 2015 alone, over 800,000 migrants, while France and the UK counted for 650,000. However, not all countries are willing to host refugees for more than three months, claiming they do not have the necessary financial means to provide food, shelter, and professional orientation and counselling for everybody. On the other hand, extremist parties across Europe already started to retaliate against Germany’s policy to shelter and integrate the two million migrants. These parties claim that migrants, in their vast majority coming from Muslim countries, cannot adapt to the culture and customs of Europe and pose a threat to the European population. They do not speak any European language, come from states where gender inequities are high, and are not willing to integrate in the new society. Moreover, many migrants do not seem to want to find a job, but instead choose states with advantageous social policies, such as Germany, Austria, Norway or Sweden.

2. Short term effects of migration in Europe

The latest migration wave from the MENA region to Europe induces important effects on the economy, both on the long term, as well as on the short term. An article published by Rakesh Sharma (2015) counts for three major short-term effects: an increase in social sector spending, an alteration of the local labour market, and an increase in the aggregate demand. Housing estimative up to three million migrants/ refugees by 2017, European countries deal with a significant financial effort.

Continuingly promoting the “Wohlstand für Alle” (“Prosperity for All”) politic, Germany represents the country that has put on almost most of the efforts on housing, sheltering, feeding, counseling, and even educating foreigners. Country reports on 2015 show that Germany spent over 21 billion EUR just for sheltering and trying to integrate the refugees in the German society. However, determining small communities to embrace large refugee communities of a different religion proved to be a failed charity lesson, since countless cities across Germany reported that refugees became un-submissive to the local authorities and even violent with the locals, engaging into robberies and assaults. News of the New Year’s sexual assaults and robberies in Köln, by Syrian and Pakistani asylum seekers, spread across the world, as the most important publications (including BBC, The Guardian, CNN) talked about the impossibility of many migrants to adjust to European customs and the rules of the country they are now residing in.

Apart from the obviously high social sector spending, host countries also encounter, on the short term, an alteration of their labour markets. As part of the integration politic, host countries might encourage migrants to join the local labour markets. Skilled refugees might end by competing with inhabitants for local jobs and even displacing them, which would lead to a temporary increase in the unemployment sector. However, in the case of countries with aging population (such as Germany, Austria, France, The Netherlands and the Northern countries), migration could increase the number of working-age members of the economy, also determining an increase in the local GDP. Moreover, migrants are willing to apply for jobs that locals usually refuse, which are paid less, and even require a higher risk factor. It is the case of UK, which deals with over 6,6 million migrants from and outside Europe (The Migration Observatory, 2015). Here, migrants are usually taking over the poor sector of the market, with jobs ranging from the fields of constructions to retailing, and cleaning. The UK scenario is relevant to all large European economies swallowing millions of migrants yearly.

The third short-term economic impact of the migrant wave counts for an increase in the aggregate demand. New comers represent potential new markets and services that can revive local economies, and even boost incomes and national GDPs. In order to diminish their home sick and keep in touch with their cultural heritage, migrants and asylum seekers will look for local products, shops, and even churches or schools, which will attract new funds and create new jobs.

However, by looking at the examples of Lebanon or Jordan, both developing countries, the economic short-term effects of a large number of migrants are mainly negative to the local economies. The demands for energy and food supplies have lead to a “disastrous” outcome for Lebanon’s economy. As a World Bank report shows, “the influx of Syrian refugees cost the local economy \$2.6 billion between 2012 and 2014” (Rakesh Sharma, 2015). An IMF study (June 2014) has also proved that the economic effects of the Syrian civil war on Jordan

have been undeniably negative, especially in the trade balance field. Because of the conflict and the refugees residing in the country, combined exports to Europe and Turkey dropped by 30% in Jordan, while the local inflation increased by 0,6%. Overall immediate economic aspects are rather negative to all developing countries that received a large number of migrants in a short period of time. Another IMF report (January 2016) suggests that, for some EU countries, the expenses managing asylum seekers could increase up to 0.1% of GDP in 2016. However, these figures are theoretical, since there cannot be any precise forecast on the total number of migrants arriving to Europe by the end of the year. Table 1 shows the fiscal burden for the top EU countries receiving migrants and refugees in 2014 – 2016 (first quarter).

Table 1: Fiscal costs for asylum seekers, per EU country, between 2014 and first quarter of 2016

Fiscal Cost of Asylum Seekers, 2014 – 2016			
	2014		2015
2016			
Austria	0.08	0.16	0.31
Belgium	0.07	0.09	0.11
Croatia	0.002	0.09	0.11
Cyprus	0.003	0.012	0.012
Denmark	0.24	0.47	0.57
Finland	0.09	0.13	0.37
France	0.05	0.05	0.06
Germany	0.08	0.20	0.35
Greece	n.a.	0.17	n.a.
Hungary	0.0	0.1	0.0
Italy	0.17	0.20	0.24
Luxembourg	0.05	0.09	0.24
Netherlands	0.10	0.18	0.23
Serbia	0.0	0.06	0.1
Spain	0.006	0.006	0.03
Sweden	0.3	0.5	1.0
United Kingdom	0.015	0.016	n.a.
Simple average		0.07	0.14
			0.22
GDP-weighted average		0.08	0.13
			0.19

Source: IMF estimates based on authorities' information in EU countries and/ or other sources. For 2016, the values given are estimated and may vary.

Although the effects of such politics may not be extremely relevant for GDPs on short and medium terms, on long terms, any additional costs could lead to a series of macroeconomic unbalances.

According to the same IMF report, the European Commission is struggling with the migrant crisis by its own, proposing to boost the central resources, specifically destined for refugees in the 2015 – 2016 budget. Thus, the former 1.7 billion EUR, or approximately 0.01% of EU's GDP should reach a staggering 9.2 billion EUR,

or little under 1% of the GDP. The additional required money should consist of relocated resources from other parts of the central budget. The newly-formed budget for refugees should suffice covering the costs that member countries spent for supporting migration, including provisions, counselling and sheltering. In addition, a high amount of money would be paid to extra-communitarian countries, like Turkey, in order to relocate a large number of migrants from EU borders to Turkey and determine all non-Syrian asylum seekers to return to their home countries.

On the other hand, as opposed to the negative short-term effects and the fiscal burden for certain EU countries, the migration wave could lead to a population increase of about 0,15% (IMF, January 2016) in the following year. Since the major population of Europe is aging, this could boost local economies and determine the appearance of new jobs, as more migrants could join the working forces in their adoptive countries. It is estimated that a refugee will take up to two years to become eligible for work in the European space (three in Germany), giving already certain communication and cooperation skills. Since the vast majority of migrants consists of youngsters, this could mean that Europe will see a shortage in its unemployment rate, as migrants are more willing to take lower-paid jobs at the beginning. However, migrants will start contributing to their host country's GDP only a few years after their permanent establishment. In the years immediately after their arrival (thus, on short term), migrants are less likely to obtain a job, resulting in a high unemployment rate among them. As they accumulate more information about their new hosting country and learn the language, they will actively participate in the economic field, by picking up jobs natives would originally consider turning down. Discrimination could still apply, especially for female migrants and refugees coming from an Eastern culture, which may lead to significant gaps on earning and employment rate between migrants and natives.

This adds to the fact that, on average, asylum seekers from the current migration wave, especially originated from Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, Somalia, former Yugoslavia or Eritrea, are less educated than the natives, and even than other immigrants. With only a secondary degree and almost no college degree, migrants from these areas are less likely to smoothly integrate in their new society and become active members of it. This statement is also proven by an OECD research (2015), showing that the unemployment gap between immigrants and natives is of 10% or more in countries like Spain, Greece or Belgium. On a similar note, in Europe's biggest economies like France or Germany, there is also a significant educational gap between the children of natives and those of immigrants, which could perpetuate future long-term unemployment rates, and even cause dissensions.

Whatever the case, Piketty (2013) considers that the current migration crisis Europe is confronting with represents "an opportunity [...] to jump-start the continent's economy".

3. Long term effects of migration in Europe

On the long run, most economists and policy makers consider migrants may produce large financial benefits for the host countries. Investment opportunities, new products and an entirely new market sector represent the most appealing economic side effects of opening the borders and welcoming refugees, asylum

seekers and migrants. Obviously, the most challenging part is to help newcomers to integrate in the economic circuit and become productive for their home countries. Germany, the top destination for thousands of migrants takes up to three years before allowing migrants to seek for a job and become active members of the community, meanwhile the state must provide shelter, food supplies, medical care, counselling and trainings. According to Robert Meyer, marketing professor at Wharton, there are two types of people found in almost all migration waves across the world. The highly skilled migrants usually count for the economic type of migration, allowing educated and valued individuals to seek better remuneration in Western countries. On the other side of the tunnel, one can find the “opportunity seeker” migrants, the humanitarian migrants and the ones who are not sufficiently trained to prosper in a capitalist economy. The latter have little to no education and, as previously noted, are willing to take up any jobs and opportunities encountered, thus not representing a menace for country natives in terms of labour. By mixing these two highly distinctive migrant communities, the long term effects of migration will be positive for home countries, as the first category will determine market competition and give valuable, highly trained professionals, while the latter category will opt for low-key jobs, with minimum to medium wages, not posing a threat to the educated natives who are striving for medium to high annual incomes.

On the other hand, according to the same IMF 2015 report refugee surge in Europe, immigration could affect “the use of fiscal resources by natives” (p. 27). On the short term, allowing migrants to enter the working field could cause a rise in the unemployment rate, as the home economy is not ready to receive so many new workers on the market. Moreover, highly educated migrants could take over of some of the “native” jobs, causing natives’ unemployment rate, and thus, a wage lowering. Furthermore, this wage lowering will be translated into fewer economies, which could affect commercial bank policies, by forcing banks to lower their interest rates in order to encourage consumption and savings.

The so-called “welfare shopping” represents a concept many migrants from the current wave are seeking in Europe. Migrants specifically target countries with generous benefit systems, which can allow them to live a rather decent living without contributing too much to the local economy. Again, one of the most “generous” countries in Europe is Germany, without a doubt the country with the most asylum requests on the continent. Here, migrants are not allowed to work until after three years and even after, if they find a job, they will be taxed as all other migrants in the society, meaning less than natives. Moreover, if migrants lose their jobs, they are subject of further welfare benefits, determining, yet again, a lower fiscal contribution to the state and a possible diminish in the country’s GDP.

In order to discuss the net fiscal impact of migrants, it is crucial to take a glimpse of their age-structure. Young and old migrants have a smaller net contribution to the state, while mid-age active migrant population offers more net contributions to the budget. However, this new migration wave showed an incredible amount of youngsters taking the Western route, as opposed to elders or women. An UN Women report (2016) claimed incredible gender disparities in the over one million refugees and asylum seekers. Out of these, approximately 25% are children and toddlers, while only 17% are women, leading to an overall male exodus of 58%. This gender disparity could be helpful for Europe’s aging population and decreasing number in the active population, since most of the

refugee men are over 18 and ready to work. On the other hand, cultural barriers and language misunderstanding leads to little to none migrant integration in the working field until after three years from their first arrival.

Another important aspect is that women are highly unrepresented in this current migrant wave. Counting around 170,000, female representatives are even less likely to easily integrate within the new housing country as they possess little communication skills, and are often under the influence of their group's male leader. Moreover, since the vast majority of refugees and asylum seekers are of Muslim religion, women have, often by default, a diminished role in the society and are deprived of education and, therefore, the possibility to join the market labour force. As a result, housing countries have to provide long-term welfare benefits and spend additional amounts of money for training courses for those willing to integrate in a Western society.

Last, but not least, different types of migrants share different types of privileges in selected Western countries. Apart from the regular intra-communitarian migrants, exclusively relocating for better paid jobs, humanitarian migrants have yet to be statuary defined by the societies. Each status comes with its own perks and downsides, including work permits, employment conditions, wages, access to welfare and public services, or permanent settlement chances. This results in a scruffy, continuously updating policy plan and budget which could lead to extra costs throughout the years. In addition, the already one million-plus migrants seeking for a better life in Europe may even apply, in the following years, for a family reunification programme, which could determine an increase in the already high number of asylum seekers.

4. Security risks

With imminent terrorist menaces such as the Islamic State or Boko Haram, the current migration wave coming from the MENA region raises serious security problems for European inhabitants. Over one million other migrants are expected to reach Europe by the end of 2016, out of which nearly 320,000 will lead straight away to Germany. Around 40% of the asylum seekers come from the hot spots of conflict, Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Nigeria and Pakistan. The population exodus coming from Turkey to Greece and, then, spreading towards Western and Northern countries has already damaged the image of numerous EU countries, creating divergences among policy makers. Many countries have already shut down their borders (including Hungary and Serbia), which could determine migrants to seek for alternative routes to reach countries in the West. Many governments impugn the migrants' easiness to request for asylum and apply for a refugee status. According to international regulations, a person is entitled to become a refugee and ask for asylum in the immediate vicinity of his/ her home conflict zone, whereas the vast majority of asylum seekers come from Asian and Northern African countries. Meanwhile, the wealthy Gulf relatives such as Qatar, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain refuse to accept Syrian refugees, forcing them to seek shelter in countries with more permissive legislatives. Under these circumstances, one is entitled to ask for the real reasons why countries with similar cultural and historical background are shutting down people fleeing away from war zones.

The clash of civilisations between the Eastern, Muslim world and the Western, European model seems to be at its peak with thousands of migrants arriving into Europe, but still holding on to their home mentalities in terms of gender equality,

state aid and job opportunities. With conflicts deepening by the day between European natives and refugees, Muslim by majority, it comes as no surprise why religious radicalism allures more adepts daily. What is more important, it seems that Europe is not only confronting with serious security issues when it comes to the current migrants, but also has problems with its own citizens, descendants of former migrants, currently at their second – third generation in Europe. Radicalism seems to have taken over Europe, with recent terrorist attacks from Paris, Brussels or Ankara, proving that terrorist cells are planning a long-term staying on the continent.

On a recent briefing media (The Guardian, 2016), NATO's top commander, Philip Breedlove, claims that current refugees are susceptible to ISIS' hunting for sympathisers across Europe. Adding to the fact that ISIS already threatened, in 2015, to flood Europe with over 500,000 refugees as a "psychological weapon" (Dailymail; Independent), the NATO commander's claims seems to fuel security uncertainties across the continent. President Obama already announced that the United States is ready to accept 10,000 Syrian refugees in 2016, while Australia and Canada openly agreed to receive refugees and integrate them. However, few of them are considering the option of travelling over the Atlantic, maintaining Germany as their primary option when escaping from their civil wars at home. Since ISIS continues to spread across the Middle East borders and take over new cities rapidly (Brisard; Martinez, 2014), more and more people are afraid that refugees only represent the perfect way to mask terrorists and send them freely to settle in an overly permissive Europe.

More and more politicians abroad consider that the recent terrorist attacks spree in Europe is the result of a terrorist menace coming from outside the continent's borders, and is most likely going to intensify in the following years with the migration flood. However, as tempting as it may be to blame the foreigners, the vast majority of terrorist attacks within Europe in the last years have preponderantly come from inside the continent, from Europe's own citizens, converted to radical Islam and being linked to deadly terrorist groups like Al-Qaeda or the more recent Islamic State. The racial hatred is most likely going to grow even more inside European borders, with large Muslim communities from Germany, France, Spain or Belgium only having to suffer from isolation, alienation, and even possible future racist policies that will discourage and reduce to the minimum their involvement in the social life. The shy policy conducted now by Western states to offer Turkey financial aid to send back all non-Syrian refugees will not determine terrorist to pack their bags and swim back to the MENA conflict zones, but will only show how little Europe is really prepared to efficiently fight against terrorism. By sending away all asylum seekers and shutting down the borders the European Union could diminish its financial costs, but will not fight against the terrorism flagellum.

International organisations like United Nations High Commissionaire on Refugees systematically fail to give supporting solutions to the problems, and to help migrants integrate in new societies, meaning that the ultimate solution seekers remain the most influent policy makers in Europe. Defending human rights in a continent that is most likely to become a conflict hot spot in the next years seems like the last concern of those who see the refugees as the ones responsible for bringing terrorism in Europe. Thus, instead of banning foreigners to enter it, Europe should rather look on its own citizens and ban their access to jihadist preachers and prevent them from travelling to war zones where they could easily

enrol in terrorist groups. Sure, there is no certainty that among the chaos created by the migration flow terrorist groups are not sending their own representatives, but the true danger lies within Europe's own citizens rather than a myth-fuelled shadow coming from Islam and claiming a worldwide caliphate.

5. Conclusions

The refugee crisis represents, without a doubt, the most challenging problem Europe had to face in the last two decades. Humanitarianly speaking, refugees fleeing from their war zone homes should be allowed to start a new life away from the danger, in a safe environment, and should be helped by those in power. However, it seems that European countries, alongside Canada, the US and Australia represent the only powers willing to take on such a responsibility, while the wealthiest countries in the Middle East, with strikingly similar culture and history and religious heritage turn away their backs on their own people. Economically speaking, Europe is facing a possibility of over two million refugees entering its borders until the end of 2016, which highly impacts national budgets, confusing all economic sectors. Short-term effects could be disastrous to European developing economies and seriously concerning for stable economies such as Germany, Austria, Sweden or Finland. Long term effects will most likely impact the population dynamic, boosting Europe's aging population, determining the appearance of new economic sectors, investments and consumers, as well as a considerable increase in the labour active population. Adding up, European countries willing to receive a high amount of asylum seekers from the Middle East will most likely amortise the costs of sheltering and caring after them in a long term, while having to face costs of up to 20 billion EUR per year on the short term.

However, apart from the obvious economic implications, the social implications of the new refugee wave seem far more dramatic. Europe already faces imminent terrorist menaces and receiving another million Islam practicing people could shake up the already existing dissensions between various European religious confessions. A nation majorly built on Christian beliefs seems impossible to understand the Islamic world of most asylum seekers where human rights and gender equality are not thoroughly respected. The conflict bubble already exists in the large European capitals like Madrid, Berlin, Brussels or Paris where Muslim communities exist, but to add the pressure of nearly other two million people of the same confessions seems too hard to handle for extremist parties in Europe, as well as for ordinary citizens who feel threatened.

Last, but not least, Europe fears for the safety of its own citizens, trembling in the face of new terrorism rage casted by jihadists. Shutting down borders will not solve the problem, but nearly ban foreigners to establish within the continent for a short period of time. European leaders should find real solutions for the terrorism spread and prevent its citizens from being allured into radical groups.

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