

Immigration is a complex issue that requires a balanced approach. It is important to consider the economic, social, and cultural factors that contribute to migration. By addressing these factors, we can work towards a more just and equitable immigration system.



**Immigrants to Europe caught
by the Spanish Coast Guard**
(<http://yaleglobal.yale.edu>)

**“...Economic integration is definitely
necessary to full integration of immigrants
into their new society....”**

บทคัดย่อ

ปัญหาและอุปสรรคของผู้อ้ายถิ่นในยุโรปและแนวทางปรับปรุงโอกาสในทางเศรษฐกิจ

สุนีนาฎ โล่ห์พัฒนาณรงค์

ในปัจจุบันมีคนเป็นจำนวนมากได้โยกย้ายและตั้งหลักปักฐานในประเทศที่มิใช่ประเทศของตน ผู้โยกย้ายถิ่นส่วนใหญ่เผชิญปัญหาทางเศรษฐกิจในประเทศของตน และต้องการโยกย้ายไปยังประเทศที่เจริญกว่าเพื่อความเป็นอยู่ที่ดีขึ้น ผู้โยกย้ายถิ่นบางส่วนเผชิญกับการข่มเหงทางศาสนา และการเมือง และต้องการโยกย้ายไปยังประเทศที่ตนจะได้รับอิสระในด้านศาสนาและการเมือง ผู้โยกย้ายถิ่นมากมายที่อาศัยอยู่ในประเทศต่างๆ รวมทั้งในยุโรป ต้องเผชิญปัญหาต่างๆ อาทิเช่น ความไม่เห็นอกเห็นใจในด้านการว่าจ้างเมื่อเทียบกับพลเมืองในประเทศที่ตนไปอาศัยอยู่ เรื่องที่พกอาศัยประจำกันสุขภาพ ปัญหาในด้านภาษาและการสื่อสาร เป็นต้น

ปัญหาเหล่านี้ควรได้รับการแก้ไขจากผู้มีส่วนเกี่ยวข้องในสหภาพยุโรป หากผู้โยกย้ายถิ่นในยุโรปได้รับการสนับสนุนในด้านต่างๆ ไม่ว่าจะเป็นการศึกษา การฝึกฝนความชำนาญในด้านทักษะต่างๆ เป็นที่เชื่อว่าผู้โยกย้ายถิ่นเหล่านี้ จะมีความเป็นอยู่ที่ดีขึ้น และสามารถมีส่วนรวมในการพัฒนาเศรษฐกิจทั้งในชุมชนและประเทศที่ตนได้โยกย้ายเข้าไปอยู่

Keywords: Immigrants in Europe, EU Immigration Policy

Problems and Challenges of Migrants in the EU and Strategies to Improve Their Economic Opportunities

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Today, one human being out of 35 is an international migrant. The number of people who have settled down in a country other than their own countries is estimated at 175 million worldwide.¹ Nearly all countries are concerned by international migration, whether as sending, transit, or receiving countries, or as a combination of those.² International migration has become an inherent feature of globalization.

¹ Information Kit on the United Nations Convention on Migrant Rights, July 1, 2003, (Online) Available at: <http://www.unesco.org/most/migration/convention> (accessed October 11, 2007)

² "It is time to take a more comprehensive look at the various dimensions of the migration issue, which now involves hundreds of millions of people and affects countries of origin, transit and destination. We need to understand better the causes of international flows of people and their complex interrelationship with development." UN Secretary General Kofi Annan (from his report on strengthening the organization, 09/11/2002), (Online) Available at: <http://www.unesco.org/most/migration/convention> (accessed October 11, 2007)

Why do migrants move?

Most migrants move for economic reasons, but some migrate to escape political or religious persecution or simply to obtain a personal dream. Many are in search of better socio-economic perspectives and seek to work abroad. Migrants also move for their families: they send money back home, thereby enabling their relatives to live better lives. Migrant sending countries are also interested in these remittances, which play a key-role in their economy. In Morocco, for example, the amount of money sent via remittances represents 66 percent of total financial inflows in the country and nearly ten percent of the country's GDP.³

Other migrants move because of political circumstances. They flee war, civil strife, ethnic conflict, violations of human rights or other circumstances. Some are considered as refugees while others are asylum-seekers. Many refugees and asylum-seekers work illegally because they are not allowed to legally enter a country. Some refugees prefer to cross border as migrant workers to avoid suspicion.

Many receiving countries have reasons to welcome migrants. Migrants' presence and labour are needed because of shortages in the labour force and of native workers' reluctance to perform specific jobs; especially jobs concern the so-called 3D jobs (dirty, demanding, and dangerous), such as those in the construction and manufacturing

³ The International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, July 1, 2003, (Online) Available at <http://www.unesco.org/most/migration/convention> (accessed October 11, 2007)

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sectors and low-skilled services (hotel and restaurants in particular). Migrants are therefore pushed to leave their countries and pulled towards countries that need them. Despite the growing restrictions put on immigration policies, migration is likely to continue.

Where do migrants move to?

Migrants move from anywhere in the world to almost anywhere else. The largest countries of origin in the last decades have been countries such as Mexico, the Philippines and Bangladesh and the largest receiving countries have been Western countries (in North America, Australia and Western Europe) and other countries such as the Gulf States or Japan.⁴

In addition, migrants do not always move from the developing countries to developed countries. Fifty-five percent of migrants live in North America and Western Europe and the remaining 45 percent in the rest of the world.

⁴ OECD, "Trends in International Migration" (Paris: OECD, 1997)

Migrant population by regions and in the world (2002)

Region	Number of migrants (thousands)	Percent of total number of migrants
Africa	16.277	9.31%
Asia	49.781	28.48%
Europe	56.100	32.10%
Latin America/Caribbean	5.944	3.40%
North America	40.844	23.37%
Oceania	5.835	3.34%
<i>Total World</i>	174.781	100%

Source: *International Migration Report 2002, United Nations (Department of Economics and Social Affairs, Population Division)*

The same situation also applies to refugees: less than a third of refugees worldwide live in North America or Europe; 70 percent of them live in less developed countries.

Refugees by regions and in the world (2002)

Region	Number of refugees (thousands)	Percent of total number of refugees
Africa	4.173	21.09%
Asia	8.821	44.59%
Europe	4.855	24.54%
Latin America/Caribbean	765	3.87%

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North America	1.087	5.49%
Oceania	81	0.41%
<i>Total World</i>	19.782	100.00%

Source: UNHCR (<http://www.unhcr.ch/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/statistics>)

Migration is therefore a multidirectional phenomenon in which many countries are both receiving and sending countries at the same time.

The situations of immigrants in Europe

Without jobs, immigrants become burdens for governments and for their own communities. This issue becomes problematic for Europe. A large portion of immigrants in Europe are unemployed, making poverty an issue. Although social welfare benefits are provided to keep them out of poverty, many immigrants are not able to participate fully in the economic life of their new countries. For example, In the Netherlands, immigrants performed poorly economically. Migrants expelled themselves from stable jobs in the labor market in the 1970s and this contributed to an increase in the number of households which almost completely dependent on welfare.⁵ Another example: the labor participation rate of Turkish men in Germany in 1995 declined to 61

⁵ Kloosterman, Robert, "Migration in the Netherlands and the Emerging Post-Industrial Social Divide in Urban Areas", in Immigrants, Integration and Cities, ed. OECD (Paris: OECD, 1998)

percent while the unemployment rate stood at 25 percent.⁶ Data from other European countries is quite similar. The unemployment rates among persons aged 25-54 in France and Belgium is higher than those of natives 20 percent.⁷

Moreover, the earnings and income of immigrants tend to be lower than that of natives. In 1995, the minimum wage for German men was DM26 whereas it was DM21.30 for Turkish men and DM20.30 for other Mediterranean immigrant men.⁸ In addition, Turkish and Moroccan immigrants in Europe tended to work in unskilled jobs. In terms of self-employment, the self-employment among immigrants tends to be lower than among natives. For example, only five percent of Mediterranean immigrant men were self-employed in 1995 compared to thirteen percent of German self-employed natives.⁹

In general, immigrants in Europe have somewhat lower labor force participation rates and higher unemployment rates than do native residents coupled with lower earnings. The causes of these differences are the poorer education of immigrants and discrimination in education and earnings as demonstrated by the examples above.

⁶ Seifert, Wolfgang, "Labor Market Performance of Mediterranean Immigrants in Germany and Hispanic Immigrants in the US", Inclusion or Exclusion of Immigrants; Europe and the US at the Crossroads, Berlin, 19-20 June, 1998

⁷ OECD

⁸ Neels, Karel and Reinhard Stoop, "Social Mobility and Equal Opportunities: The case of Turkish and Moroccan Minorities in Belgium", Population Association of America, Chicago, 2-4 April, 1998

⁹ Ibid.

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**Problems and Challenges of immigrants in Europe and
Strategies to improve their economic opportunities**

○ Host country language acquisition & skills training

The situation for new immigrants facing higher unemployment and lower occupational standing compared to natives is understandable. Since Europe comprises many countries speaking different languages, immigrants who do not speak the language of the host country are likely to be at a disadvantage in finding a job and enjoying rising incomes. Acquiring host country language may be obstructed by the limited availability of courses, high cost, or other factors. However, programs emphasizing literacy, host country language acquisition, and basic skills upgrading will give unskilled immigrants greater potential to advance economically. For example, public and private companies and organizations can work together with educational institutions (universities, language schools, adult schools, etc) to expand opportunities for instruction or a company launches classes and programs by which immigrant workers can earn high school equivalency degrees in order to give immigrant workers an opportunity to advance in their jobs.

○ Housing problems

Many migrants encounter the lack of affordable quality housing. Effective urban and regional planning strategies should be taken into account. Housing, transport, health services, school facilities and the

needs of the labor market can assist immigrants to overcome ethnic and social segregation in cities and its consequences.¹⁰

○ *Social and cultural environment*

Many newly arrived immigrants may face a cultural shock and it will take a long time for them to adapt to their environment. The active involvement and participation of immigrants in sports, community activities, and other clubs is a significant step in adjusting to new surroundings. In order to avoid the chaos of racism and resentment, government should promote a positive attitude in the public towards immigrants and this certainly requires political leadership. In addition, politicians and the mass media have a major responsibility in their role as educators of public opinion.

○ *Combating discrimination*

Combating discrimination and racism at the workplace are one of the strategies to improve economic performance of immigrants. Immigrants differ from the majority population in terms of race, religion and ethnicity. Discrimination whether overt or subtle discrimination can be barriers for immigrants to obtain employment or keep them tied to low-paying jobs.

Member States should implement strong anti-discrimination policies and programs in order to fight against discrimination. For

¹⁰ Activities of the European Union: Immigration, integration and employment, (Online) Available at: <http://europa.eu/scadplus/leg/en/cha/c10611.htm> (accessed October 12, 2007)

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example, EU should seriously make it illegal to discriminate against immigrants regarding recruiting, employing or discharging because of national origins or citizenship status. So far, EU has been raising public awareness of Community and national law prohibiting discrimination and has been involving enterprises in non-discriminatory practices, particularly with regard to corporate social responsibility.¹¹ There should be closer monitoring of migrants and ethnic minorities regarding housing, employment, racial violence and education. Furthermore, EU applies another measure to combat discrimination by exchanging experiences under the Community Action Program.¹²

○ *The European Employment Strategy (EES)*

In terms of the EES, the Commission takes appropriate actions such as closer monitoring of the needs of the EU labor market and of the role of immigration in filling labor shortages, contributing to increased job mobility of immigrants in the EU through the further development of the European Employment Services network (EURES)¹³ and sustainable integration of immigrants into the labor market.¹⁴ For example, France has been active over the past few years in assisting young immigrants to integrate into the labor market by providing them with a variety of training programs.

From my point of view, there should be tax and benefit reforms that reward work and/or sanction prolonged used of welfare such as

¹¹ Ibid.,6

¹² Ibid.

¹³ See further information at <http://europa.eu.int/eures/home.jsp?lang=en>

¹⁴ Ibid.,5

earned income tax credits, time limits on receipt of cash assistance and penalties for failure to seek work. In addition, there should policies aimed at enhancing the employment stability and upward mobility of low-paid immigrants such as minimum wage requirements, subsidized child care, and public sector jobs for disadvantaged workers and other hard-to-place employees.

○ *Financial support for refugees and asylum-seekers*

Refugees and asylum-seekers need to be provided some sort of preliminary financial support in order to facilitate immigrants' entry to the labor market. EU should continue to finance the introduction of integration programs and policies for refugees and persons granted international protection through The European Refugee Fund.¹⁵

○ *Immigration policy*

In my opinion, EU should shift immigration admission criteria from focusing on taking in refugees and asylum-seekers to focusing on increasing the number of professionals, managers and persons with highly technical skills in order to reduce the number of unskilled or unemployed migrants. EU should shift towards admission criteria, favoring the entry of the highly skilled (employment-based admissions) and prioritize education to encourage admission of persons with advanced degrees. Over time, with a larger proportion of overall admissions coming from categories that take skill level into account,

¹⁵ Ibid.,6

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refugees and asylum-seekers categories would also shift towards bringing in skilled immigrants who will contribute to the economy of EU. However, EU must make sure there will not be a problem of labor shortage of work that the highly skilled do not want to engage in.

Another strategy recommended by US Commission is trade and investment activities. The US applies this strategy as one of the immigration reforms aiming to increase economic opportunities for would-be migrants. These may include financial incentives to return migrants to help them reestablish in their home communities and encouraging use of remittances for constructive economic development to provide economic possibilities for migrants in home countries.¹⁶

○ *Community Economic Development*

Community Economic Development includes assistance for ethnic entrepreneurs as a way to provide greater economic opportunities for immigrants.¹⁷ Immigrant entrepreneurs are often perceived as an important factor to revitalize the economy of their neighborhoods. On the positive side, immigrant businesses can provide needed products and services such as laundries, groceries, clothing shops, restaurants, liquor stores, various professional services, etc. Immigrant entrepreneurs also fill gaps, including export and import of products to their home countries.

¹⁶ US Commission on Immigration Reform, "Becoming an American: *Immigration and Immigrant Policy*", (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1997)

¹⁷ Martin, Susan, "Economic Integration of Immigrants", Discussion Paper TransAtlantic Learning Community Migration Workshop, August 12, 1999 (Online) Available at: <http://isim.georgetown.edu/Publications/SusanPubs/TLCEEconomic.pdf>, pp.24

In addition, in growing economic sectors, such as information technology, immigrants with specialized skills set up companies that can have tremendous growth potential.

On the other hand, immigrant entrepreneurs operate their businesses within underground economy. Some of these businesses are criminal operations. Others violate labor standard, immigration and tax laws. For example, in the garment industry, there is exploitation of workers. Immigrant entrepreneurs also face high levels of bankruptcies because they may know little of their host country's banking and credit processes, business practices, or legal requirements.

A number of programs have tried to encourage entrepreneurs to immigrate. Other programs aim at assisting immigrants how to open businesses and to follow legal requirements and avoid failure. In Europe, for example, the EMPORIUM project on Ethnic Minorities Participation (or) Involvement in Urban Market-Economy has established a net work of practitioners from a number of European cities including Birmingham, Stockholm, Frankfurt, Antwerp, Barcelona, Berlin, Vienna, Lisbon, Lille, Turin and Amsterdam, to exchange knowledge and best practices in the field of immigrat entrepreneurship.¹⁸ This project focus on developing business plans, providing training and technical assistance on contract compliance, regulations, financing and other necessary information, and helping obtain financing from banks and other lending institutions.

¹⁸ Martin, Susan, pp.24

Conclusion

Immigrants in Europe have lower labor force participation and higher unemployment rates than do native residents due to the poorer education of immigrants, compared to natives and to discrimination in education and earnings.

Economic integration is definitely necessary to full integration of immigrants into their new society. The outcomes are mixed. While most immigrants have obtained some measure of economic integration and some have achieved considerable success, a significant minority remain unemployed or trapped into low-wage jobs with little chance of upward mobility.

Because of these differences, Europe designed programs such as language training programs, skills up grading and The European Employment Strategy (EES) to help unskilled immigrants in finding employment and to improve their economic performance. For immigrant entrepreneurs, governments have established programs to educate and help them start and build successful businesses.

Hopefully, by taking vocational skills and language training program, immigrants will be able to ladder up economically in their societies and to contribute to their societies in many ways as good citizens.

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วารสารยุโรปศึกษา