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Research Report

wiiw - POLMIG database: An inventory of migration policy changes in Europe, 2013-2019

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Statistical Report 10

wiiw - POLMIG Database:

An Inventory of Migration Policy Changes in Europe, 2013-2019

Isilda Mara and Sandra Kovacevic



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An Inventory of Migration Policy Changes in Europe, 2013-2019

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Abstract

The following work has been conducted with the aim of providing detailed information on migration policy changes implemented in Europe between 2013 and 2019. It examines new measures, laws and regulations grouped by policy area, target group and typology of policy change. It provides detailed, categorized and sub-categorized changes in migration policies, including both immigration and emigration policies. The following database offers numerous possibilities for further investigation and in-depth analyses of migration policy changes in a systematic way across time and EU countries.

Keywords: migration, immigration, emigration, database, Europe, policy change

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An inventory of migration policy changes in Europe, 2013-2019

1 INTRODUCTION

Migration governance is of great importance for the global public discourse and never before has the topic been so often at the top of political agendas, as it is today. All discourses on migration issues are directly or indirectly connected and are affecting the wide spectrum of policy areas. Changes in the fields of economics, social sciences, politics and technology are strongly connected to mobility. Embedded within mobility are many issues such as human rights, development and geopolitics – at the national, regional and international level. All these intertwined policy issues and their changes over time will continue to shape the mobility agenda; at the same time migration governance will play its own role in the transformation of other policy domains. Therefore, it is essential to provide objective and balanced documentation of migration governance, of policy changes introduced by the legislators, of the typology of such changes, of the purpose and target group, and of the magnitude of changes or a qualitative assessment of such changes, with the scope of better understanding and guiding the public discourse in such a complex policy area.

Accordingly, our goal is to build an inventory of migration policy changes which have been introduced recently, and more specifically from 2013 to 2019, to provide scientists, researchers and policy makers with an explorative database of transformations in migration governance. The scope is to enable a systematic overview of migration policy changes that can be a good starting point for scholars, as well as assisting them in developing different theoretical or empirical works related to migration governance. The database aims to offer detailed information about migration policy changes being introduced by European countries. We build upon the DEMIG POLICY database produced by a team at the International Migration Institute at the University of Oxford (de Haas et al, 2014). This database offers an inventory of migration policy changes for 44 countries from 1946 to 2013. We have followed a similar structure as the one used to construct the DEMIG POLICY database for compiling and coding migration policy changes. Our motivation was that a new database, harmonised with the DEMIG POLICY database, would offer the user the possibility to access recent policy changes, but also to combine it with previous policy transformations in a systematic and uniform way. Similar to de Haas et al, 2014 we have grouped migration policy changes in four domains: policy area, policy tools, target group and immigration countries. The major contribution and insights of the methodological paper by de Haas et al, 2014 stems from the new approach used for conceptualising policy changes. Rather than an arbitrary assessment, Haas et al, 2014 applies a wider spectrum of concepts to evaluate policy changes. Migration policy changes are evaluated according to two concepts: the magnitude of change – which is broken down into four categories - and the quality of change, e.g. are migration policy changes becoming more restrictive or not. The latter concept, restrictiveness, was also one the main challenges of this work given that this concept had to be applied in a very diverse and country specific historical context. However, it allows deeper insight and a better understanding of migration changes and can serve to explain many political phenomena and waves related to security questions, human rights or xenophobia.

Also, another operational feature of the DEMIG POLICY database which we have also implemented in compiling the new database is that only those policy changes - laws and measures enacted – at the national level have been taken into account. The adopted definition of migration policies applied in the following research includes “*rules (laws, regulations and measures) that national states define and enact with the objective of affecting volume, origin, direction and internal composition of migration flows*”.¹ This means that migration policy measures can affect migration flows not only in terms of volume, but also in terms of origin, direction and composition of migration.²

Overall, the new POLMIG database covers more than 730 migration policy changes enacted between 2013³ and 2019 in EU countries. Detailed qualitative information is also provided for better understanding and evaluating migration policy changes as well as assessing their evolution over time. The database is a useful set of information which can assist researchers in combining both qualitative and quantitative methods to analyse how migration governance shapes mobility and vice versa.

The rest of the methodological note is organized as follows. We briefly introduce the coding of migration policies, the coding of policy changes, the coverage of countries and time series and finally we illustrate the usefulness of the database with some examples.

2 METHODOLOGY

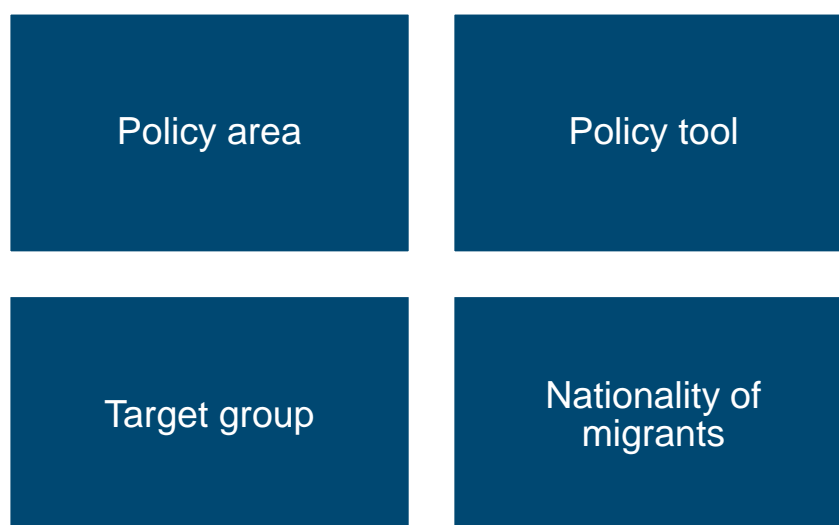
2.1 Coding of policy content and policy changes

Following de Haas et al, 2014 we have grouped migration policy changes into four domains: policy area, policy tools, target group and immigration countries, see Diagram 1-2. In more detail the policy area has the scope to answer the question “what” and aims to cluster migration policies into broader groups of policies which regulate the following aspects: entry in the destination country through border control and management; policies which assist entry and stay in the destination country; policies which govern integration in the destination country and policies which tackle and manage exit from the destination country.

¹ Czaika, Mathias, and Hein de Haas. 2013. "The Effectiveness of Immigration Policies." *Population and Development Review* 39(3):489

² Hein de Haas, Katharina Natter and Simona Vezzoli ("014)Compiling and coding migration policies in: Working Papers No 87, p.5

³ Year varies (2012-14) depending on the already existing data

Diagram 1 / Coding of migration policies

Source: own elaboration, wiiw POLMIG database

Each of these policy areas has a number of policy tools which have an operational role and try to answer the question “how”. For example, operational tools used to manage entry and stay in the destination country are visa regimes or quotas. Therefore, those migration policy changes which regulate mobility have been clustered in the domain of policy tools, with more details provided in Diagram 2. The database also contains evidence about the target group. Accordingly, the third domain indicates “the group of migrants that will be affected by such policy changes and answer the question “who””. For example, new policy changes that regulate the entry and stay in the destination country of spouses of migrants already residing in the destination country will have a defined target group and will mainly affect family members’ reunification. Lastly, the fourth block of information tries to answer the question “where is s/he from” and indicates the origin country of migrants. In this context, the information is first clustered into broader groups which specify if such policies apply to all migrants, specifically to EU citizens or only to a specific group of migrants. Afterwards, the information is disaggregated further and the information about specific nationalities is provided. More details are found in Diagram 2.

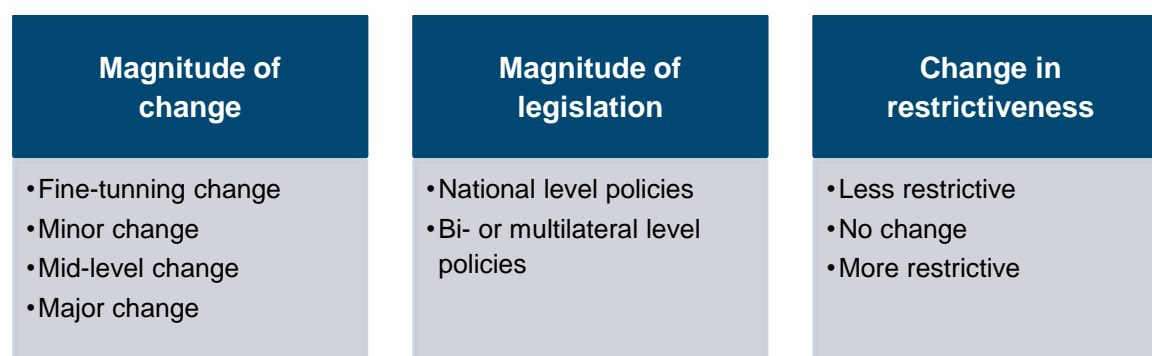
Diagram 2 / Coding of migration policies, tools, areas and target group

Policy Area	Policy tool	Target group	Nationality of migrants
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Border and land control • Exit • Integration • Legal entry and stay • Quota target 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to citizenship • Access to justice and political rights • Access to permanent residency • Access to social benefits • Action Plan, Strategy, Report • Detention • Employer liabilities • Entry ban • Entry visa/Stay permit • Expulsion • Free mobility rights/agreements • Identification documents • Institutional capabilities • Language, housing and cultural integration programs • Other sanctions • Points-based System • Quota/Target • Regularisation • Reintegration/return programs • Resettlement programs • Surveillance technology/control powers • Work visa/permit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All • All migrant workers • All migrants • Diaspora • Family members • Family members of highly skilled workers • Family members of irregular migrants • International students • Investors, entrepreneurs and businesses • Irregular migrants • Low-skilled migrants • Refugees, asylum seekers and other • Skilled/highly skilled workers • Specific categories 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All • All foreign nationalities • Citizens • EU citizens • Specific nationalities

Source: own elaboration, wiiw POLMIG database.

Following the clustering of policy areas, tools, and target groups, the next step is coding policy changes. Also in this context following de Haas et al, 2014 the coding of migration policy changes is categorised by the magnitude of change, the quality of change and the level of legislation, as presented in Diagram 3 below. In more detail, every policy measure is assessed and is given a value of restrictiveness which is defined as “more restrictive” if the policy represents a change towards more restrictive migration policy and “less restrictive” if the policy applied within the same legal system, compared to the previous situation, has become less stringent, e.g. more supportive for attracting highly skilled migrants. Moreover, an indication about the country, year, or target group and a short summary that describes the policy change is provided. In addition to the direction of change, the magnitude of the policy change has been defined following these categories: major change, mid-level change, minor or fine-tuning change as well as information that is provided if the policy change has been made on the national, bilateral or multilateral level.

Diagram 3 / Coding of migration policy changes



2.2 Data sources

The main sources of information are the following:

- › OECD International Migration Outlook publications
- › Asylum Information Database (AIDA)
- › National data sources of EU countries
- › International data sources

More specifically, the inventory of migration policies has been compiled with data from the OECD's “International Migration Outlook” yearly reports, 2013 to 2019 (38th to 43th Report). These reports analyse recent developments in migration policies in OECD countries and some non-OECD economies. The publication investigates the progress of immigrants' labour market outcomes,⁴ and also contains country- specific notes and information on annual development, policy changes and any migration movement-related actions. Further data sources include the Asylum Information Database (AIDA) which covers 20 European Union member states as well as Serbia, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and Turkey. This database is managed by the European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE). It contains

⁴ OECD (2019), *International Migration Outlook 2019*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/c3e35eec-en>.

information on asylum procedures, reception conditions, detention and international protection standards across 23 countries. AIDA is also an important source of information about policy changes with respect to asylum seekers, refugees and persons benefiting from subsidiary protection.⁵ AIDA National Reports are usually collected by different organisations engaged with these issues, national authorities and other institutions responsible for collecting asylum/refugee statistics, and is further edited by ECRE.

3 WHAT CAN BE ACHIEVED WITH THE WIIW-POLMIG DATABASE

The POLMIG database is a useful tool for addressing a number of research questions on migration governance. In this section we provide a selection of the numerous questions this database can answer. Its advantage is that the voluminous information of about 700 migration policy changes implemented in 23 out of 28 EU countries (the Baltic states, Malta and Cyprus are not included) – applying to different groups of migrants originating from different countries and across the time period 2013-2019 - can be easily and quickly accessed in a structured and harmonised format which is comparable across countries. To illustrate, we address a few questions which can be answered with the systematic information of the wiiw-POLMIG database. Accordingly:

- › How did EU migration governance change with respect to African and Middle Eastern countries after the refugee crisis?
- › What are some of the policy changes being introduced by EU countries targeting migration from the Western Balkans?
- › Have EU countries provided easier access to the entry and stay of migrants?
- › Are EU countries introducing policy changes in support of attracting highly skilled migrants from abroad?

Table 1 allows you to quickly grasp the fact that 13 out of 23 countries have introduced policy changes regarding the target group of refugees and asylum seekers or vulnerable groups arriving specifically from the Middle East and Africa and in particular those arriving from Syria, Eritrea, Iraq, Somalia, Nigeria and Afghanistan or countries afflicted by conflicts.

The policy changes being introduced fall mainly into the area which regulates legal entry and stay, but also exit, such as in the case of the Czech Republic. In this area the main policy tools used to introduce changes fall into the group of entry visas and stays – such as in the case of Austria, Germany, Greece and the UK - but also resettlement programmes - as in the case of Greece, Spain and Norway. The coding of policy changes suggests that such changes have been moving mainly in the direction of facilitating the entry and stay of asylum seekers and refugees. For example, in 2014 - the year when the exodus of refugees from the Middle East took a dramatic course - Germany accelerated the asylum procedure for Syrians and ethnic minorities from Iraq. However, the arrival of almost 1 million refugees within a year forced Germany to take a step back in 2015 by reintroducing the Dublin regulation for refugees arriving from the Middle East.

⁵ <https://www.asylumineurope.org/about-aida>

Table 1 / Migration policy changes with focus refugees from Africa and Middle East

Country	Year	Magnitude of legislation	Policy area	Policy tool ⁶	Target Group	Specific nationalities	Restrictiveness
Austria	2013	Bi- or multilateral level policies	Legal entry and stay	Resettlement programs	Refugees, asylum seekers	Syrians	Less restrictive
Austria	2018	National level policies	Legal entry and stay	Entry visa/ Stay permit	Refugees, asylum seekers	Afghan	N/A
Austria	2019	National level policies	Legal entry and stay	Entry visa/ Stay permit	International students	Morocco	Less restrictive
Belgium	2015	Bi- or multilateral level policies	Legal entry and stay	Resettlement programs	Refugees, asylum seekers	Congolese and Syrian	Less restrictive
Czechia	2017	Bi- or multilateral level policies	Exit	Reintegration/ return programs	Refugees, asylum seekers	Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iraq, Nigeria	Less restrictive
Finland	2014	National level policies	Legal entry and stay	Quota/target	Refugees, asylum seekers	Syrian	Less restrictive
Finland	2016	National level policies	Legal entry and stay	Entry visa/ Stay permit	Refugees, asylum seekers	Afghanistan, Iraqi and Somalian nationals	More restrictive
Germany	2014	National level policies	Legal entry and stay	Entry visa/ Stay permit	Refugees, asylum seekers	Syrians and ethnic minorities (Christians and Yazidi) from Iraq	Less restrictive
Germany	2015	National level policies	Integration	Language, housing and cultural integration programs	Refugees, asylum seekers	Those from Syria, Iran, Iraq and Eritrea	Less restrictive
Germany	2015	Bi- or multilateral level policies	Legal entry and stay	Entry visa/ Stay permit	Refugees, asylum seekers	Syrians	More restrictive
Greece	2014	National level policies	Legal entry and stay	Entry visa/ Stay permit	Refugees, asylum seekers	Syrians	Less restrictive
Greece	2016	Bi- or multilateral level policies	Border and Land control	Resettlement programmes	Refugees, asylum seekers	Syrians	Change in restrictiveness cannot be assessed
Luxembourg	2016	Bi- or multilateral level policies	Legal entry and stay	Resettlement programs	Refugees, asylum seekers	Syrian	Less restrictive
Norway	2014	Bi- or multilateral level policies	Legal entry and stay	Resettlement programs	Refugees, asylum seekers	Syrian	Less restrictive
Poland	2015	Bi- or multilateral level policies	Legal entry and stay	Resettlement programs	Refugees, asylum seekers	Syrian, Eritrean nationals	Less restrictive
Slovakia	2015	National level policies	Legal entry and stay	Resettlement programs	Refugees, asylum seekers	Iraqi	Less restrictive
Slovenia	2018	Bi- or multilateral level policies	Legal entry and stay	Resettlement programs	Refugees, asylum seekers	Syria	Less restrictive
Spain	2014	National level policies	Legal entry and stay	Resettlement programs	Refugees, asylum seekers	Syrian	Less restrictive
United Kingdom	2016	National level policies	Legal entry and stay	Entry visa/ Stay permit	Refugees, asylum seekers	Syrians living in the UK	Less restrictive

Source: extract of POLMIG database.

The second illustrative example provided in Table 2 shows policy changes being introduced by EU countries targeting migrants originating from the Western Balkan countries.

⁶ According to UNHCR "resettlement is the transfer of refugees from an asylum country to another State, that has agreed to admit them and ultimately grant them permanent residence".

Table 2 / Policy changes targeting migrants from Western Balkan countries

Country	Summary	Year	Magnitude of Change	Magnitude of legislation	Policy area	Policy tool	Target Group	Specific nationalities	Restrictiveness
Germany	Added countries to safe list with stricter asylum treatment	2014	Fine-tuning change	National level policies	Legal entry and stay	Entry visa/ Stay permit	Refugees, asylum seekers and other vulnerable people	Albania, Kosovo, Montenegro, Serbia, North Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina	More restrictive
Germany	Labour market access for Western Balkan	2015	Mid-level change	Bi- or multilateral level policies	Legal entry and stay	Work visa/ permit	All migrant workers	Those from Western Balkan countries	Less restrictive
Romania	Social security agreement with Quebec and Albania	2016	Major change	Bi- or multilateral level policies	Legal entry and stay	Access to social benefits and socioeconomic rights	All migrants	Albania	Less restrictive
Romania	Social security agreement with Serbia	2016	Major change	Bi- or multilateral level policies	Legal entry and stay	Access to social benefits and socioeconomic rights	All migrants	Serbia	Less restrictive
Slovenia	Bilateral agreement with Serbia on employment	2018	Mid-level change	Bi- or multilateral level policies	Legal entry and stay	Work visa/ permit	All migrant workers	Serbia	Less restrictive

Source: extract of POLMIG database.

Accordingly, between 2013 and 2019 some of the EU countries which introduced a number of policy changes targeting migrants from Western Balkan countries are Germany, Romania and Slovenia. In 2014 Germany experienced an unprecedented influx of asylum seekers from Albania, but also from other Western Balkan countries. Also, 2014 closed with a high record of asylum seekers from the Middle East and Africa asking for refuge in Germany. The response of legislators in Germany with the scope of halting the high number asylum requests from the Western Balkan countries was to expand the list of safe origin countries for migrants originating from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia.

The next example shows how many policy changes EU countries have introduced to facilitate the entry and stay of migrants in the countries of destination. Table 3 is an extraction from the POLMIG database. Reading through the table it becomes evident that between 2013 and 2019 EU countries introduced 291 policies to assist migrants in the process of entry and stay in the destination country.

The year 2018 witnessed an especially high number of such policy changes. Some of the countries which have implemented a high number of changes in this migration policy area are Austria, Denmark, Germany, Netherlands, but also Portugal. By navigating through the database, further information can be obtained on the policy tools used, the target group, and the magnitude of such policy changes.

Table 3 / Policy changes facilitating entry and stay of migrants in the destination country

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Total
Austria	2	1	2	2	3	7	4	21
Belgium	1	1	2	1	1	1	3	10
Bulgaria		1	1	2				4
Czechia	1	1	5	2	6	2	1	18
Denmark		3	2				3	8
Finland		3	3			6		12
France	2	2	1	1	2	1		9
Germany	5	2	3	2	3		1	16
Greece	1	4		2		3	1	11
Hungary	1	1		5		2	3	12
Ireland	2	1	2	2				7
Italy	1	2	4		2	2	1	12
Lithuania						5	2	7
Luxembourg	2		2	3	1			8
Netherlands	2	3	1	3	5	1	1	16
Norway	4	1	1	2		1		9
Poland		4	3	1		5		13
Portugal	1	3	5		2	3	4	18
Romania	1	2	1	4	3	4		15
Slovakia		2	2		2	2	2	10
Slovenia		2	1	1	3	4		11
Spain	1	4	2	1	1		1	10
Sweden	1	5		2	3	3		14
United Kingdom			1	1	1	3	1	7
Total	29	49	44	37	38	55	28	

Source: extract of POLMIG database. Colour scale variation from the minimum (light green) to the maximum (dark green).

The last illustrative example is an extract from the database of evidence on those policy changes which target the mobility of highly skilled workers, see Table 4. The information obtained from the database suggests that 39 policy changes have been introduced from EU countries targeting highly skilled migrants. The year 2018 also marked the highest number of such policies. Over the selected period the most active countries in this context seem to have been the Czech Republic, Germany and the Netherlands. Further qualitative information about the policy tools, the magnitude of change and specific nationalities can be obtained from POLMIG database.

Table 4 / Policy changes targeting mobility of highly skilled workers

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Total
Austria					1			1
Czechia			1	2	2	1	1	7
Denmark			1				1	2
Finland						2		2
France		1		1				2
Germany	2			1	1		1	5
Hungary				1				1
Ireland	2		1					3
Italy		1	1					2
Lithuania						1		1
Luxembourg			1					1
Netherlands		1			3			4
Poland						1		1
Portugal		1				1		2
Romania	1							1
Slovakia								0
Slovenia						1		1
Sweden	1					1		2
United Kingdom						1		1
Total	6	4	5	5	7	9	3	

Source: extract of POLMIG database. Colour scale variation from the minimum (light blue) to the maximum (dark blue).

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OECD (2019), *International Migration Outlook 2019*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/c3e35eec-en>

AIDA <https://www.asylumineurope.org/about-aida>

USEFUL LINKS

Asylum Information Database

<https://asylumineurope.org/>

DEMIG POLICY data downloads

<https://www.imi-n.org/data/demig-data/demig-policy-1/download-the-data/demig-policy-data-downloads>

The DEMIG C2C (country-to-country) database

<https://www.imi-n.org/data/demig-data/demig-c2c-data>

Database on immigrants in OECD and non-OECD countries

<https://www.imi-n.org/completed-projects/dioc-e>

Migrant Integration Policy Index (2015)

<http://www.mipex.eu/>

Knowledge Centre on Migration and Demography

https://bluehub.jrc.ec.europa.eu/catalogues/data/dataset?package_type=dataset

Global Compact for Migration

Data portal

https://migrationdataportal.org/?i=stock_abs_&t=2017

Migration Law Database

https://imldb.iom.int/_layouts/15/IML.Portal/AppPages/Home.aspx

<https://www.politico.eu/>

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