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**Article**

## Introduction to the issue on A new common migration policy for the EU: Why and how?

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Introduction to the Issue on

# A New Common Migration Policy for the EU – Why and How?

*Chang Woon Nam*

Migration issues are at the top of the European Union's political agenda today. Migration can be divided into the following types: the desired and necessary immigration of skilled workers, which counteracts the shortage of qualified professionals and unfavorable demographic trends in the host country, while the less desirable immigration of less educated foreigners causes higher costs for integration into the labor market and increases the risk of burdening the social welfare system. In addition, there are refugees from conflict zones and other poor regions of the world who are seeking asylum abroad due to life-threatening political and/or economic conditions in their home countries. Now all these groups come to Europe either legally or illegally. The perception of cultural and identity threats posed by a large influx of migrants has also further strengthened nationalist sentiments and the appeal of political parties advocating stricter immigration controls, which in turn has rapidly increased support for far-right populist parties in many EU member states.

Against the backdrop of competition with other economic centers (such as the US and Japan) for highly skilled third-country nationals, EU member states are striving for a balanced and comprehensive approach to migration that pursues objectives as diverse as attracting highly skilled migrants, preventing irregular migration, and protecting the human rights of migrants. However, in a single market with free movement, it is necessary to go beyond the 27 national immigration policies. The further development of a common European migration policy, taking into account the experiences and practices of individual countries, can make immigration rules simpler, less bureaucratic, and more transparent for both immigrants and the competent authorities.

The unfair distribution of responsibility for asylum seekers between EU member states under the “Dublin system” and the lack of compliance with the rules have long been a point of contention in the Common European Asylum System. To address these shortcomings, the new Pact on Migration and Asylum introduces a binding but flexible solidarity mechanism under which member states are obliged to make contributions in the form of resettlement, financial contributions, or in-kind contributions. Despite this innovation, it remains controversial whether the measure is sufficient to compensate for the disproportionate responsibility of member states at the EU's external borders, as the country of first entry

criterion is retained in the new Pact. A new annual migration management cycle, introduced with the Pact, provides for concrete steps to identify member states under pressure and the need for solidarity based on a comprehensive approach and assessment of migration, reception, and asylum capacities.

Further EU-wide policy coordination also seems necessary to alleviate socio-economic pressures and promote greater social cohesion in the EU and its member states. For example, coordinated action at the EU level to provide better access to education, language courses, and employment opportunities for migrants can also be crucial to facilitate their integration into the European labor market and their social inclusion.

Focusing on the current legal framework and enforcement of the EU migration and asylum system in the context of the single market, and taking into account the experiences of member states in European migration crises, the authors of this issue of EconPol Forum critically assess the reasons why the results of the EU's migration policy efforts so far have been less satisfactory and why the EU now needs a new, better coordinated policy. In this context, they also make some policy suggestions on how the EU can improve the quality of legislation, enabling more intensive European cooperation to enhance enforcement performance and leading to a sustainable long-term migration policy and governance in the EU.

*Panu Poutvaara* believes that the EU's “mobility partnership” agreements with countries of origin and transit create synergies by jointly addressing the challenges caused by immigration. It is efficient to let member states decide for themselves how many low-skilled work visas they want to grant to applicants from each partner country, taking into account their own labor market needs, while the main policy issue in high-skilled immigration is to make Europe sufficiently attractive compared to alternative destination countries. Financial support for countries that accept more than their share of asylum seekers is justified on the grounds of both fairness and efficiency. In addition, support for the resettlement and integration of refugees should be combined with efforts to reduce irregular migration by opening legal pathways to work in Europe, including for low-skilled migrants.

Many people around the world are moving to the EU for various reasons, including persecution in their home country and better economic prospects in the EU (“mixed” migration). Without restrictions, far more

people would migrate to the EU than the EU is able or willing to accept. The EU must therefore ensure that persecuted people have access to protection, while at the same time limiting mixed migration to the EU. *Matthias Lücke* suggests that one way to achieve this is for the EU to provide financial and political support for the reception and accommodation of refugees and migrants along migration routes, while partner countries restrict people smuggling and irregular onward movement. Better responsibility-sharing among EU member states could require a stronger financial and operational role for the EU in the asylum system, as refugee protection and open borders in the EU serve the public good.

*Angelo Martelli* points out that security is the main concern of citizens in destination countries, who feel threatened by migrants and refugees. They often call on their leaders to regain control by erecting barriers and closing borders. At present, not only is there a prolonged failure to move from crisis management to sustainable global governance of migration, but there is also a need to move beyond the lump of labor fallacy and emphasize the net contribution of migration through improved integration and social cohesion. Consequently, a successful migration strategy must be multilayered and address both the causes of displacement and the impact on displaced persons and host communities.

To make a common migration policy feasible, *Eugenia Vella* argues that the EU must address the economic and social inequalities that divide its member states. Success depends on striking a balance between national sovereignty, economic inequality, and solidarity, while ensuring a fair division of responsibility within the bloc. As with fiscal integration, the realization of a common migration policy in small steps is more realistic. Failure to act risks exacerbating labor shortages, economic stagnation, and social fragmentation. On the other hand, adopting a bold and unified migration strategy would enable the EU to fully exploit the potential of migration to promote prosperity and cohesion.

For *Eiko Thielemann*, refugee protection in Europe is characterized by free-riding and a highly unequal distribution of responsibilities between EU member states, which has persisted over the past 30 years and during the three major refugee crises (Yugoslavia, Syria, Ukraine) despite EU solidarity initiatives. The effectiveness of such initiatives has remained limited as the EU has struggled to develop policies that go beyond voluntary (and often symbolic) responsibil-

ity-sharing initiatives. To become more effective in addressing refugee disparities, the EU should seek to develop more substantive (market-oriented and binding) solidarity initiatives than it does in its recently adopted European Pact on Migration and Asylum.

According to *Florian Bartholomae*, *Chang Woon Nam* and *Alina Schoenberg*, a fairer distribution of refugees among EU member states can optimize labor markets, promote social cohesion, and reduce populist sentiment in the EU if the age and educational level of refugees are taken into account. Current models for refugee distribution often do not meet the needs of host countries, and the inclusion of differentiated indicators such as age, education level, and social resistance can improve fairness and efficiency. While favoring younger and educated refugees can improve integration outcomes, this approach must be reconciled with humanitarian principles to maintain ethical standards in refugee policy.

*Jeroen Doomernik* postulates that it is unwise and unproductive to issue asylum regulations that do not fully take into account the resources and ambitions of refugees. The 2016 Asylum and Migration Management Regulation (AMMR) does not solve the main problem, and the responsibility lies with the country of first arrival. The new accelerated border regime at the EU's external borders is likely to fail or lead to serious human rights problems. It would be desirable to use the experience of the Temporary Protection Directive (TPD) and its free movement for Ukrainian refugees as best practice, and recognized refugees should ideally have the same free movement as EU citizens.

In the draft migration strategy recently presented by the Polish government, migration issues are largely viewed from the perspective of regaining control and ensuring security, as *Piotr Lewandowski* explains. Poland's emphasis on national sovereignty and the drawing of strong cultural boundaries has long dominated the Polish government's narrative on migration. The challenges faced by Poland in integrating Ukrainian refugees into the labor market, such as the downgrading of professions and the non-recognition of qualifications, illustrate the risks of unequal integration frameworks in EU member states. A coordinated EU policy could eliminate these inequalities by facilitating the recognition of qualifications, supporting the placement of qualified jobs, and standardizing access to integration services such as language courses.

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