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Migration: A Crisis Europe Can't Keep Out

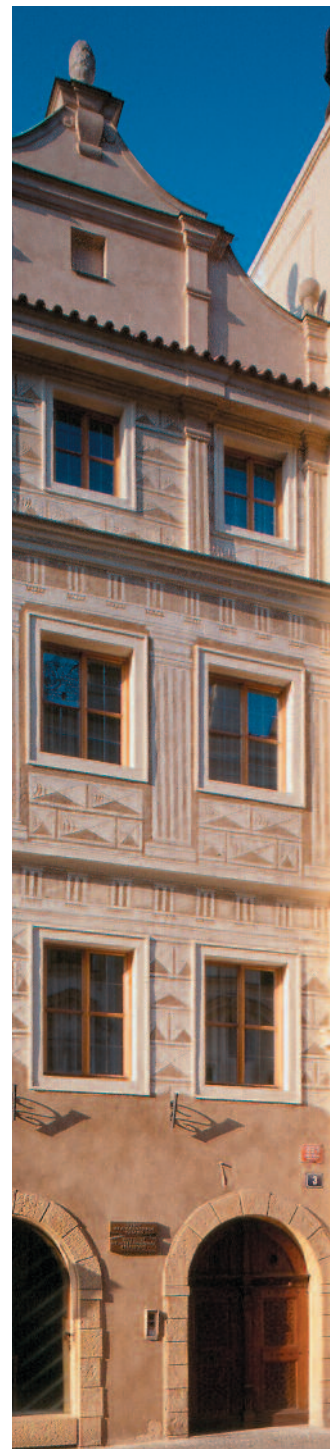
SUMMARY

Difficulties in persuading EU Member States (EUMS) to act in solidarity with each other – or with refugees – have led to a focus on the ‘external dimensions’ of the migration crisis.

This has created a misleading impression of the crisis as external to, rather created by, the EU and EUMS.

Equally misleadingly, this framing suggests that the crisis can be dealt with outside, rather within the EU – generally by trying to stop the flow of migrants to Europe.

This policy paper challenges this framing and argues that the migration crisis is one of Europe’s own making – and one which must be addressed, primarily, at home.



Introduction

The difficulties that the EU and EUMS have had in devising coherent or effective internal policies to deal with the migration crisis make it understandable that they have sought common ground elsewhere. Specifically, they have sought to make progress by dealing with the 'external dimensions' of the migration crisis. This desire to externalise the crisis has taken several forms: upgrading protection of external borders (through e.g. the creation of the EU Border and Coast Guard Agency); making deals with neighbouring countries to reduce flows (e.g. with Turkey or the African states involved in the 2015 Valetta summit); targeting development aid at migrants' origin and transit countries; or by emphasising the need to prevent and resolve conflicts (such as that in Syria) that are seen to forcibly displace people.

However, Europe's externalisation strategy, its various tactics or policy dimensions will not work for two main reasons.

1) It focuses too much on stopping migrants trying to reach the EU. This is unrealistic in the face of global megatrends that point to massive increases in migration and mobility.

Externalisation is not only futile but will also prevent, delay or at least distract the EU and EUMS from making the necessary changes to their approach to migration.

It is also not only undesirable – it goes against Europe's interests *inter alia* in terms of our clear need for economic migrants – but is also indefensible – clamping down on mobility and preventing refugees from reaching safety are against European values.

By pursuing such an approach, the

EU and EUMS risk their identities as liberal actors, which would be to the further detriment of both their values and interests, as well as to the lives of migrants and EU citizens.

2) It creates a false impression that particular elements of the crisis can be isolated and dealt with 'over there', at a safe distance from Europe and without having to change too much in either EU or EUMS internal policy and Europeans' attitudes towards migration and mobility. Externalisation is not only futile but will also prevent, delay or at least distract the EU and EUMS from making the necessary changes to their approach to migration that could facilitate the transformation of crisis into opportunity.

This policy paper addresses these issues in turn and looks at how and why at the EU and EUMS' externalisation strategy will not work in each instance. The paper then offers recommendations that would help the EU and EUMS make migration manageable – and beneficial – rather than perpetuating the negative cycle of crisis.

Stopping Migrants is Unrealistic and Undesirable – Let Them in!

The EU's attempt to externalise the migration by stopping people on the move from reaching the EU is misguided and takes two main forms. Improved border protection, partly through the upgrading of Frontex to the new Border and Coastguard Agency which aims to help EUMS better to interdict people attempting to enter the EU irregularly, but also through the deal with Turkey that outsources and offshores these interdiction efforts, is clearly aimed at stopping people from arriving in the EU. The focus on preventing or resolving conflicts, but also on targeting development assistance at countries of origin or transit are intended to prevent people from leaving home in the first place. While the former seeks to reduce so-called forced displacement,

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the latter seeks to reduce peoples' perceived need to move by providing better conditions where they are. None of these measures are likely to work and even if they succeeded in stopping migrants from coming to the EU that would be undesirable.

Recent studies of migration show that migrants adapt increasingly quickly and effectively to obstacles placed in the way of their desired movements (e.g. Parkes, 2016). The shifting routes used to enter the EU by large numbers of refugees and other migrants from 2010-2016, but particularly from 2014-2016, show the futility of trying to simply stop flows of people from entering a territory, by blocking a particular route – such as that through Turkey. Migration experts generally concur that if people wish to move, they will find a way to do so, however arduous it may be (see Goldin, et al, 2011; Pallister-Wilkins, 2016). The deal with Turkey may well have been a necessary step to buy time and regain some semblance of control over EU borders but it cannot be a replacement for a comprehensive approach to migration and mobility. Such deals also leave the EU effectively hostage to the (geo)political machinations of the states that it relies on to not simply channel migrants towards Europe – like Turkey, but also Russia – whose interests may be different than its own.

The value of regaining 'control' over EU external borders should, however not be underestimated. It is a necessary, although insufficient, condition for the survival of the Schengen zone. It is, moreover essential for facilitating (rather than preventing) orderly, regular and safe mobility – as recently proposed by in the UN Global Compacts on migration and in keeping with the EU's approach to bordering restated in Article 4 of the recently amended Frontex regulation. This can only happen if border protection is seen as part of, rather than a replacement for, a comprehensive mobility and migration

strategy – as border guards are the first to acknowledge. In the absence of such a coherent policy – including both safe passage for refugees and increased legal channels for economic and lifestyle migrants – then, while large numbers of people still desire to come to Europe but are not provided with ways to do so, its main effect will be to push people into riskier journeys.

Trying to stop migrants reaching Europe is only part of the EU and EUMS' externalisation strategy. It is accompanied by moves to try to discourage migrants from embarking on their journeys in the first place – through renewed focus on conflict prevention and resolution in the case of refugees and development aid in the case of economic or lifestyle migrants. Like the Turkey deal and enhanced border protection, these policies do not offer viable solutions to the migration crisis and the notion that they will reduce

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migrant numbers flies in the face of global megatrends that show that migration will only increase in the medium-to-long-term. The 'supply' of migrants is projected to significantly increase in the next fifty years as more and more people calculate that the benefits of migration outweigh the costs at the *micro-level*, and find them-

selves better connected – and thus able to realise their desire to move – at the *meso-level* of social, physical and information networks. The 'push factors' that form the *macro-level* of migrant decision making will also significantly increase the supply of migrants as world becomes less poor but more populous, more urbanised and more educated.

There are currently less than 300m migrants in the world, but the global middle class – from where most future migrants will come – is projected to grow to 3.2bn by 2020. If even relatively few (say 10%) of these people make – and act on – the rational decision to migrate it would more than double the current global migrant population. What's more, development aid is likely to accelerate rather than slow or stop this process. Economic development combined with increased urbanisation and education creates a demographic 'migration hump' as large numbers of people move out of severe poverty and become aware of the benefits of migration *and* their possibility to realise them. The numbers of migrants seeking to move to Europe is also likely to increase (for more on the long term trends see Goldin, et al 2011 [which provides a meta-study]; Legrain, 2006; Parkes, 2016).

Relatively high wages and living conditions as well as respect for democracy, the rule of law, fundamental rights and freedoms are all aspects of Europe's attractiveness to mi-

grants. But the key reason for the high *supply* of inward migrants is our *demand* for them. This is the ‘dirty secret’ of the migration crisis – migrants come because, for certain reasons at least, we want them to. Europe will continue to have a structural demand for migrants in the medium-to-long-term due to its declining and ageing populations and (generally) declining fertility rates. Many migrants still do the ‘dirty, dangerous and difficult’ work that local populations don't want to and which cannot be offshored, which often leads to a lose-lose reliance on undocumented workers that increases exploitation and unfair competition for local workers while reducing tax revenues (The Economist, 2015; Goldin, et al, 2011).

At the other end of the labour market spectrum, Europe needs to compete for the best of global talent if we are to maintain and improve our living standards and our global competitiveness. It is here that the intersection of economic self-interest and liberal values could be Europe's great advantage. However, Europe's defensive response to migration, which aims to prevent migrants from reaching the EU or discourage them from leaving home in the first place, negates this advantage. Global mobility and migration are growing and will continue to do so. Europe could reap the benefits of this but currently seems more like King Canute trying to turn back the tide. This is not only futile but contra to both EU interests and European values. Rather than trying in vain to keep migrants out, the EU and EUMS need to address the internal shortcomings that have turned migration into a crisis in the first place.

To Address the Migration Crisis Europe Must Look Inside, not Outside

As an OECD report put it in 2015 “Europe has the proven capacity and the experience to find means to deal efficiently and appropriately with large migration movements.” That Europe has not been able to do so is not due to being overwhelmed by external events but is rather due to the unwillingness of the EU and EUMS to both effectively coordinate the implementation of existing policy or to develop an approach that reflects the realities of 21st Century mobility.

The most obvious shortcoming is the failure to agree on how refugees and asylum seekers should be distributed among EUMS. This has created uneven burdens and pressures on both arrival countries (such as Italy and Greece) and destination countries (particularly Germany, Sweden and Austria). It is generally recognised that the common border that Schengen brings requires a Europeanisation of bordering practices – culminating in the upgrading of Frontex to a European Border and Coast Guard. However, there has been no such willingness to meaningfully Europeanise migration policy in general. In-

stead EUMS have regressed to irresponsible buck-passing, betraying both humanitarian obligations and the spirit of EU integration. With few exceptions – most notably Germany – this approach has led to an unedifying race-to-the bottom with EUMS attempting to reduce ‘pull factors’ by reducing their own attractiveness to migrants in general as well as refugees in particular.

This approach threatens the survival of the Schengen zone. Without proper burden sharing or, at the very least, ‘effective solidarity’ between Schengen states, it is likely that temporary suspensions of free movement will become more permanent. Moreover, this approach has both reflected and reinforced a more hostile approach to migration in Europe in general – both within the EU and to Europe from elsewhere. Given the significant expected rise in global migration flows, continuing in this way would not only create difficulties in implementing policy but would compromise both European values and European interests.

Truly deterring such movement would require such brutality and expense that it would be economically ruinous (also taking account of the lost economic benefits that migration

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is widely acknowledged to bring). It would also fundamentally change the character of the EU and EUMS away from the liberal and socially responsible identities that have been carefully crafted and which draw on the lessons of European history. This would have serious and negative implications for Europe’s position in the world

and the ability of the EU and EUMS to project normative power. They would no longer be able to advocate credibly for the type of liberal, rules-based international order that benefits all European states – and geopolitically precarious states, such as those in Central and Eastern Europe, most clearly.

Europe needs a more open approach to migration – we need to provide greater protection to refugees (and share the costs of doing so) but we also need to provide additional channels for regular and legal economic/lifestyle migration and enhanced mobility more widely. For this to happen, two key aspects of the way the EU and EUMS approach the issue need to change. First, the focus on the negative aspects of migration – the threats and challenges of mobility and inward migration must be balanced by serious assessment of their benefits including, but not limited to, economic benefits. This would, in effect, mean creating a form of ‘Opportunity Analysis’ to act as a counterweight to the Risk Analysis that dominates the production of knowledge about migration and border management (Tallis, 2015 provides an extended discussion of this). Sec-

ond, however it requires a serious challenge to the negative – and erroneous – representations of migration and mobility that have dominated European debate. Refugees have been portrayed as dangerously different, culturally and socially threatening and – at best – as economic burdens on the societies they move to. Economic migrants are ridiculously, but effectively, as ‘Schrödinger’s migrant’ who simultaneously ‘steals’ jobs and lazes around on state benefits. The latter portrayal was particularly effective in the Brexit campaign and was particularly targeted against Central & East Europeans.

Each European country can draw on successful experiences with migration (whether related to immigration or emigration) but these success stories go untold amidst a climate of xenophobic populism. For example, the positive aspects of the Central and East European migration wave to the UK need to be emphasised (despite the way it has been portrayed by much of the media and politicians across the spectrum) as do the successes of multicultural integration that have seen Sadiq Khan become the Mayor of London. We can also talk of the 4 million migrants who came to Spain between 2000 and 2010 or the doubling of annual permanent legal entries to Germany (to 500,000 per year) between 2007–2014 (OECD, 2015).

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If the EU is to survive as a liberal force in world politics and if Europeans are to harness the considerable benefits that increased migration and mobility can bring, then EU and EUMS political leaders must take up the challenge of telling these currently unpopular stories and of countering the myths that have led to migrants being scapegoated for the worst aspects of neoliberal globalisation. Meaningful action is required to address the material grievances and dis-integration of excluded communities among native populations, for which migrants are blamed but not responsible, but it must be accompanied by speaking up for migrants. If it is not, it will be to the detriment of refugees and economic migrants and the countries they come from, but also to the European countries they seek to come to.

Key Recommendations

1. The EU and EUMS should **stop focusing on ‘external dimensions’ of the migration crisis** and look instead at what needs to be changed in their own policy and approach

toward migration in general and inward migration and mobility to Europe in particular. They should also **factor in the likely and significant increase in global migration and mobility in all decision making on migration**, border and mobility policy.

2. The EU and EUMS should consider how they can best **increase legal, regular channels for inward migration and circular mobility**, which would help meet the EU's demand for migrants and migrants' demand for increased mobility. Simplification of residence and labour bureaucracies and reduction of visa requirements can be combined with effective border control to achieve enhanced mobility in a secure environment. Similarly, the EU and EUMS should **review Schengen visa regimes and eliminate them where possible** – as they have successfully done in the case of Ukraine and Georgia.
3. In line with the proposed **UN Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration**, the EU should develop mechanisms of properly **evaluating the opportunities and benefits of migration** – as well as its costs and threats – and to factor these benefits into decision making at the EU and EUMS level through the creation of a mobility ombudsman's office.
4. EU and EUMS political leaders who seek to protect the EU and uphold values to **publically challenge the gross misrepresentations of migrants (including refugees)** and of migration and mobility that have characterized much of the debate in Europe in recent years and **actively promote the benefits of migration and enhanced mobility**.
5. EU and EUMS should work to **improve border protection** (including through the new EU Border and Coast Guard) but should do so with the goal of **enhancing regular mobility and providing safe passage for refugees** while deterring irregular mobility.
6. EUMS should propose measures to make **'Effective Solidarity'** a workable concept, building on and fleshing out the proposal of the Slovak Presidency, with particular regard to equitable distribution of the humanitarian cost of refugee flows and potential offshore processing and safe passage options. They should consider including **compensatory funding mechanisms from within the EU Budget**.
7. For EU and EUMS to **build on the proposals for a European Pillar of Social Rights** to make a more social union in general that would **help to integrate not only migrants but also excluded and marginalized elements of native populations**. This would help to address some material grievances that migrants are wrongly scapegoated for and could help to improve the climate of discourse around migration and liberal approaches to trade, mobility and borders.

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