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The case for a common European refugee policy

Massimo Bordignon and Simone Moriconi

Executive summary

LEGAL AND POLITICAL issues left the management of the 2015-16 refugee crisis mostly in the hands of national governments, but this is incompatible with an integrated economic area that has largely abolished internal borders. It is also incompatible with some founding European Union principles, such as the existence of a common European policy on the mobility of people.

A GREATER ROLE for European institutions and policies is needed both for policing the common borders and imposing common welcome policy standards for refugees, based on best practices. EU measures are also required to face the long-term problems related to immigration, as it is very likely that economic and demographic differences between the EU and neighbouring countries will lead to further crises in the future. Planning for this requires ample and dedicated resources, and a long-term strategy based on agreements with immigrants' countries of origin, a task that no EU country can pursue alone.

SOME PROGRESS HAS been made to strengthen the role of the EU, with the adoption of new directives, such as the Asylum Procedures Directive, and the establishment of the European Border and Coast Guard Agency. However, the situation is still far from satisfactory. There are major differences in refugee welcome and integration policies in EU countries, as shown by differences in asylum request outcomes in different countries and the different integration processes. There is also a serious lack of information about the skills and competences of refugees in different countries. This is a problem because this information is a necessary first step for an integrated welcome policy that might transform a challenge into an opportunity for aging European economies.

SUCH DIFFERENCES BETWEEN EU countries are not only inequitable but also inefficient. They lead to massive distortions in the functioning of European labour markets and create incentives for refugees to seek asylum in specific countries. Moreover, the promise made by EU institutions of a refugee relocation programme is presently not being kept, leaving the countries of first entry to carry disproportionate burdens. Legal procedures are part of the problem because the Dublin Regulation, approved under different circumstances, obliges the first-entry country to examine asylum requests. However, political obstacles play the main role. EU countries are very different in terms of their cultural attitudes towards immigration and it is difficult to impose a common solution on them. Practical solutions, based on the countries that do not want refugees making compensation payments, are probably the most realistic avenues to follow.

MASSIMO BORDIGNON (massimo.bordignon@bruegel.org) is a Non-Resident Fellow at Bruegel and a professor at the Catholic University of Milan

SIMONE MORICONI (simone.moriconi@unicatt.it) is an assistant professor at the Catholic University of Milan

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Introduction

In recent years, wars and conflict in the Middle East and sub-Saharan African countries have led an unprecedented number of refugees to come to Europe. In 2015, the number of first-time asylum applicants exceeded 1.2 million, compared to about half a million the previous year. By the second half of 2016, the crisis seemed to have abated, thanks to a great extent to a European agreement signed in March 2016 with Turkey that allowed Greece to return all new irregular migrants to Turkey in exchange for money and easier immigration to Europe for Turkish nationals[1].

The deal raised ethical and legal concerns, but it certainly has been successful (so far) in reducing the pressure on the eastern route to central Europe. However, the problem is still mounting elsewhere. In Italy, the number of arrivals in the first ten months of 2016, about 160,000 people, was 13 percent higher than in all of 2015. Moreover, people kept dying. In the first ten months of 2016, about 5,000 migrants died trying to reach Europe, 3,700 in the Mediterranean alone.

The refugee crisis has put strain on border control, policing and the institutions in the affected European countries that process refugees. It has also been costly, in particular for fiscally constrained countries. However, if addressed cooperatively at the European level, the numbers of refugees and the allocation of resources seem to be entirely manageable for a wealthy continent of almost 500 million people. Flows of people have increased, but they are still of the same order of magnitude of the immigration flows that different European countries have successfully faced in the last decade.

Nevertheless, the crisis has highlighted the difficulty for European countries and European Union institutions to come up with common solutions. The sharing of the burden of processing asylum applications is still a key source of controversy at EU level. By December 2016, more than a year after the EU promised to relocate 160,000 refugees from Greece and Italy to other EU countries, a permanent home had only been found for 8,162 people, according to the European Commission (2016a). Part of the problem is the inadequacy of the existing legal framework defined by the Dublin Regulation[2]. Originally introduced to address individual asylum claims, it has proved ineffective in handling a mass influx of displaced persons. It has also imposed an excessive burden on the countries of first entry that, under the Regulation, must examine asylum requests. Attempts to revise the Dublin Regulation have so far failed.

The EU responded to the refugee crisis by allocating additional resources, creating specific agencies and introducing a European Border and Coast Guard Agency. It also attempted to further harmonise asylum procedures through the Asylum Procedures Directive (2013/32/EU), which entered into force in July 2015, and through EU agencies such as the European Asylum Support Office. However, EU intervention has not been successful in sharing the responsibility for asylum seekers between member states.

Notwithstanding current European regulations, major differences between countries remain in terms of their welcome and integration policies for refugees. Furthermore, the European Commission's decision to relocate refugees from the EU countries most affected[3] has been resisted by many member countries, particularly in eastern Europe. One of the

1 See EU-Turkey statement of 18 March 2016, http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2016/03/18-eu-turkey-statement/.

2 The purpose of the Dublin Regulation (No. 343/2003 of 18 February 2003), is to determine which state is responsible for examining an asylum application – normally the state where the asylum seeker first entered the EU – and to make sure that each claim gets a fair examination in one member state. The Dublin system operates on the assumption that, as the asylum laws and practices of EU states are based on the same common standards, asylum seekers can enjoy similar levels of protection in all EU countries. In reality, asylum legislation and practices still vary widely from country to country, causing asylum seekers to receive different treatment in different EU countries.

3 This was part of a 2015 European Commission package of proposals to address the refugee crisis; see Commission press release of 9 September 2015: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-5596_en.htm.

obstacles to the enforcement of migration policies coordinated at the EU level is legal: is passing the responsibility for asylum requests to EU supra-national authorities compatible with member states' human rights obligations? In the current legal and institutional framework, migration and asylum policies are essentially domestic issues and it is not clear to what extent EU member states, even if willing to do so, could pass their decision-making powers to supra-national EU institutions (Carrera and Guild, 2017). This fundamental problem of sovereignty has been exacerbated by the rise of populist, right wing and anti-immigration political parties in many countries, deterring member states from giving up those powers in favour of broader European policies.

There seems to be no alternative to attempting to build a common European approach to the refugee crisis

However, there seems to be no alternative to attempting to build a common European approach to the crisis. Border control, security and unified management of asylum systems are obvious public goods for an integrated area such as the EU that has largely abolished internal borders. Countries acting independently are very unlikely to offer these public goods efficiently. Joint policing of borders, pooling of resources and common rules for asylum seekers are necessary ingredients to avoid opportunistic behaviour by EU countries. Furthermore, the problem is not going to disappear, whatever the outcome of the Syrian conflict – the main current conflict leading refugees to seek entry to Europe. Unsettled political conditions in many countries neighbouring Europe might lead to a new refugee crisis in the next future. In any case, the different economic and demographic dynamics in Europe and in neighbouring continents are bound to increase migration pressures in the decades to come.

To address these problems, Europe needs develop a legal and institutional framework, featuring an integrated approach, both for the short-term – such as the present refugee crisis – and the longer term. If well managed, immigration from foreign countries might also offer positive economic opportunities for European countries that have aging populations and that need to finance vast social welfare systems. For asylum seekers, this specifically requires effective *policies* and best practices that favour integration and prevent human capital depreciation. These practices should be monitored and supported by the EU in any country involved, taking stock of the successful experience from some countries. This Policy Contribution discusses the needs for a European migration policy, and considers where more policy coordination is actually needed.

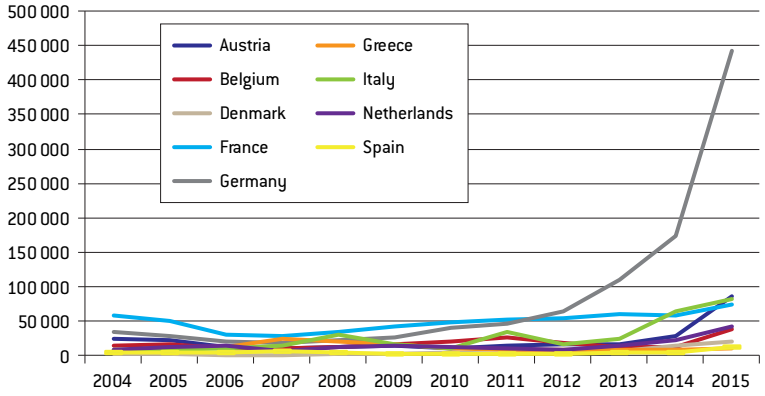
The refugee crisis

Inflows of asylum seekers to Europe increased in the first decade of the 2000s, particularly so after 2005. The increase was marked in countries such as Germany and Italy, much less so in Belgium, Austria and Spain (Figure 1 on the next page). This is even more evident when looking at the growth rates of asylum applications. Countries such as Germany, Denmark, Sweden and Italy were characterised by cumulated growth rates well above 50 percent from 2003 to 2013. For some other countries (France, Greece and the Netherlands) inflows were roughly constant (ie growth rates close to zero). Other countries, notably Austria, Belgium and Spain, even saw a reduction in the number of asylum seekers between 2003 and 2013 (Table 1 on the next page).

It is in this context that the so-called 'refugee crisis' – a consequence of the changed geopolitical situation arising from the Syrian civil war and the uprisings that followed the Arab Spring in North Africa and the Middle East – started. In 2015, the number of first-time asylum applicants in the EU exceeded 1.2 million, more than doubling compared to the previous year. All the main EU countries, with the exception of France, experienced a growth rate of over 100 percent in the inflow of asylum seekers from 2013-15, touching 300 percent in Germany and Austria. Eurostat (2017) suggests that in 2016 the crisis was still ongoing, although at a reduced tempo after the agreement with Turkey. For instance, in the third

quarter of 2016, more than 280,000 people requested asylum in the EU, double the number in the same quarter of 2015 (Eurostat, 2017).

Figure 1: Inflow of asylum seekers (first-time requests) into selected European countries (thousands)



Source: Bruegel based on data from OECD *International Migration Outlook 2015*.

Table 1: Inflow of asylum seekers, growth rates (first-time requests), selected European countries

	[1] Growth rate 2003-13	[2] Growth rate 2013-15
Austria	-22%	389%
Belgium	-26%	212%
Denmark	65%	175%
France	1%	17%
Germany	117%	303%
Greece	0%	38%
Italy	91%	224%
Netherlands	7%	199%
Spain	-24%	224%
Sweden	73%	188%

Source: Bruegel based on data from OECD *International Migration Outlook* 2015 and Eurostat.

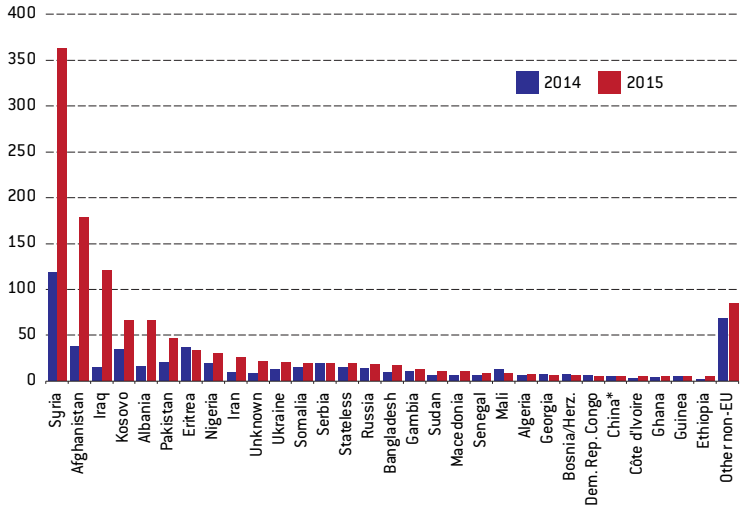
Where do these asylum seekers come from? Making a general statement is impossible. The composition by origin of inflows of asylum seekers into the European Union has continuously changed over time, depending on the main geopolitical developments taking place inside and outside Europe. There was a remarkable change in the composition of the inflows by nationality between 2014 and 2015, triggered by the Syrian crisis (Figure 2). Higher numbers of applicants from Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq, and to a lesser extent from Albania and Kosovo, were the main contributors to the increase in the number of asylum seekers.

Such a large and sudden inflow of people of course might create serious problems in terms of welcome and integration policies. An important issue is the cultural values, skills and abilities of these newcomers, many of whom will find a permanent placement in an EU country. For instance, the economic literature is broadly positive on the effect of immigration on the economies of receiving regions[4]. Immigrants are typically shown to be complementary,

4 See for instance Dustmann *et al* (2016) for a review and evaluation of the different approaches to the analysis of the economic impact of migration.

rather than substitutes, on labour markets, doing jobs that the natives no longer want to do. Immigrants, being typically younger than natives, also help to finance the welfare states of receiving countries. However, this refers to economic migrants, who probably already had the skills, or had made an investment, to become employable in the receiving countries. Refugees are different, although even in this case, those who attempt the dangerous trip to Europe are a self-selected minority of the total number of displaced people[5]. Having a precise idea of the competences of these newcomers would be very useful to guide integration policy.

Figure 2: Countries of origin of non-EU asylum seekers in the EU, 2014 and 2015



Source: Eurostat, Asylum Statistics, 2017. Note: thousands of first-time applicants. * China includes Hong Kong.

Table 2: Migrants and asylum seekers: gender and age composition, selected countries

Country	Total	of whom:			
		0-14	14-17	18-34	Females
Immigrants in 2014					
Spain	305,454	14%	4%	42%	50%
France	339,902	17%	3%	51%	52%
Italy	277,631	13%	3%	47%	50%
Extra-EU refugees in 2014					
Spain	5,615	17%	4%	56%	32%
France	64,310	19%	3%	51%	38%
Italy	64,625	3%	4%	84%	8%

Source: Eurostat, migration and migrant population statistics; asylum statistics.

Unfortunately, such precise information is not gathered for refugees. What is known is that asylum seekers from outside the EU are much younger than economic migrants already located in Europe, and that males are overrepresented compared to females, although this can vary greatly in destination countries (Table 2). The lack of more accurate information about refugees' skills is partly a result of the extremely difficult conditions at frontline refugee

5 For instance, in the case of Syria, out of approximately 6 million refugees, 45 percent live in Turkey and only 15 percent reached Europe, with most in Germany and Serbia.

reception centres. It can also be extremely difficult to verify the information collected at registration, and to confirm the authenticity of original documents when they are provided. However, there might also be political concerns in the destination countries, because having precise information about the education, skills, qualifications and professions of refugees might increase the fears of natives of labour market competition.

National responses

The differences in the responses of European countries to the refugee crisis are stark, especially if one considers that already in 2001 the EU adopted a directive laying down common standards for member countries in the case of a massive influx of refugees (2001/55/EC). Furthermore, a second directive, in 2005 (2005/85/EC), set out common procedural guarantees for asylum procedures, including for example rights to a personal interview, to appeal decisions and to receive information on the outcome of asylum claims. This directive has since been replaced by the Asylum Procedures Directive (2013/32/EU), mentioned in the introduction.

In the current refugee crisis, Germany stands out as the main recipient of asylum requests with 61 percent of total applications made to EU countries. Germany was followed by Italy (8 percent), France (6 percent), Austria (5 percent) and the United Kingdom (4 percent). These five countries account for more than 80 percent of all first-time applicants filing applications in EU countries in 2015 (Eurostat, 2017).

Figure 3 shows that there are significant differences in the behaviour of the five countries when taking decisions on asylum applications. Austria and Germany register the highest acceptance rates by far (77 percent and 68 percent of total asylum requests, respectively). Italy and UK have much lower acceptance rates, around 33 percent of total requests, followed by France, which in the first quarter of 2016 conceded refugee status to less than 30 percent of total asylum seekers.

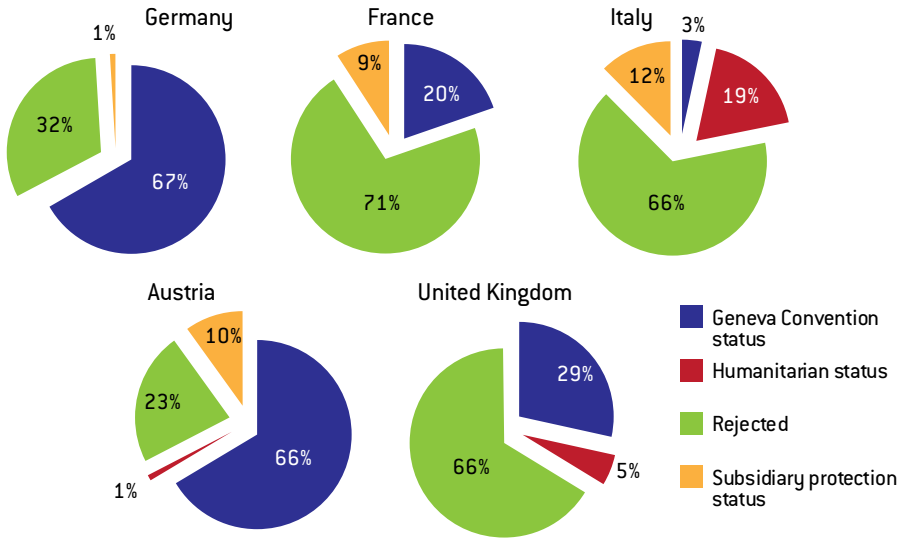
There are notable differences also in the *type* of status assigned to refugees. In Germany, the vast majority of accepted asylum seekers were given refugee status under the umbrella of the Geneva Convention. In Italy, France and Austria, roughly 9-12 percent of asylum seekers were given subsidiary protection status, meaning they did not qualify as refugees but were still considered to face a real risk of suffering serious harm if returned to their home countries[6]. In Italy and the UK, a different status, humanitarian status, meaning authorisation to stay was given for humanitarian reasons, was granted to 19 percent and 5 percent of asylum seekers, respectively.

These differences might be in part a consequence of the different nationalities of refugees in the different destination countries. For example, 90 percent of all Syrian refugees asked for asylum in Germany[7], and the acceptance rate was close to 99 percent for Syrians, followed by Eritreans (94 percent) and Iraqis (73 percent). Acceptance rates for refugees from other countries were much lower, and other nationalities mainly went to different destination countries. For instance, acceptance rates for refugees from non-EU European countries were extremely low: of the 15,300 first instance decisions issued to Albanians, only 400 were positive (or a 3 percent rate of recognition). Similarly, only 1 percent and 3 percent of the final decisions issued, respectively, to Serbians and Kosovars were positive (all data from Eurostat, 2016).

6 EU Directive 2011/95/EU (the Qualification Directive) gives precise definitions of terms that relate to the status of refugees and others eligible for protection; see http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2011:337:0009:0026:en:PDF.

7 Germany agreed to suspend Dublin regulations for refugees from Syria, meaning that these could directly appeal to Germany for recognition.

Figure 3: First instance decisions on asylum applications, first quarter 2016, selected countries



Source: Eurostat (2016).

However, even taking into account the different flows of refugees to destination countries, the differences between EU countries is still remarkable. A 2010 UN Refugee Agency report covering 12 EU countries, for example, found numerous differences in the way they assessed asylum applications[8]. The study concluded that EU countries apply the Asylum Procedures Directive (2013/32/EU) in diverging ways, and in some cases, in ways that might breach international law.

Challenges

What are the factors behind these differences in how countries deal with asylum claims? One major issue in dealing more uniformly with the growing migratory flows is that the EU is made up of structurally diverse countries that are subject to opposing political and social incentives and which retain full sovereignty over, and full responsibility for, migration policy.

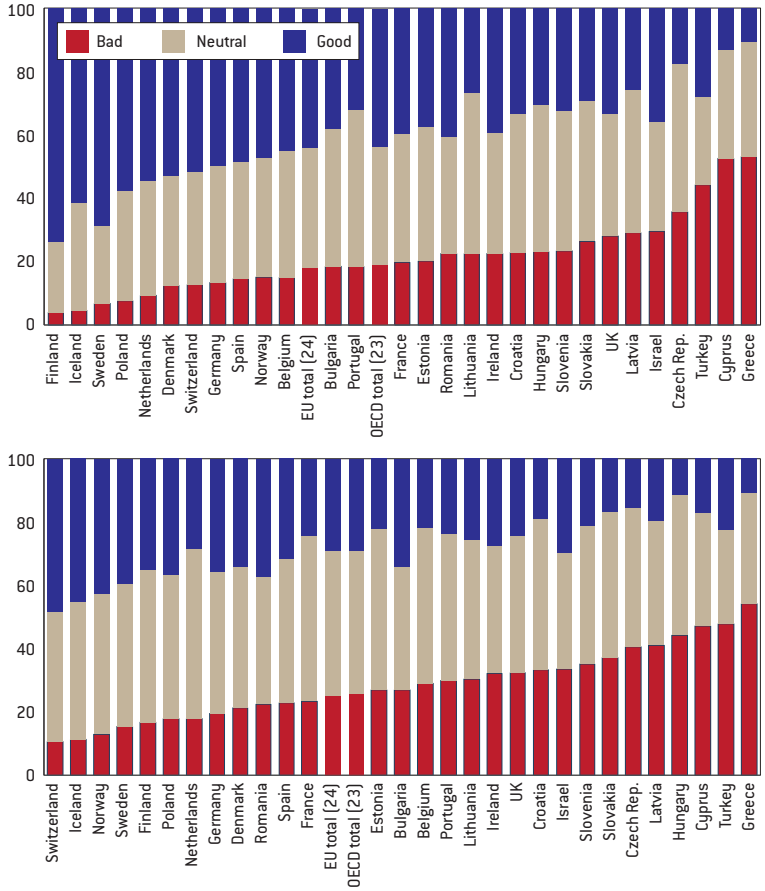
A first difference is the *societal perception* in different countries of the contribution of immigrants to the culture and the economy of their country of residence. These perceptions are well described by cross-country survey data from the European Social Survey 2008-2012, which gauges the extent of agreement with one of two statements: *"a country's culture is undermined or enriched by immigrants"* and to the statement *"immigration is good for the economy of the country"* (see http://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/). The OECD report *Indicators of Immigrant Integration 2015: Settling In* further shows how unequal and divergent societal judgements about immigrants' cultural contribution are (Figure 4).

Generally speaking, continental European and Nordic societies (eg German, Swiss, Danish, Finnish, Swedish) display more positive attitudes towards immigration. By contrast, people have relatively more negative attitudes towards immigrants in several southern European countries (eg Greece, Cyprus) and central/eastern European countries (eg the Czech Republic, Latvia, Slovakia), where less than 30 percent of respondents positively evaluate the

8 The countries covered by the analysis were Belgium, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, Slovenia, Spain and the United Kingdom. See UNHCR (2010).

cultural impact of immigrants. Economic evaluations of the impact of immigrants are less polarised, but countries rank similarly.

Figure 4: Perceived cultural impact (upper panel) and economic impact (lower panel) of immigrants, by country



Source: Indicators of Immigrant Integration 2015: Settling In, OECD, based on data from the European Social Survey, 2008 (http://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/).

Given differing cultural attitudes, it is perhaps not surprising that best practices in welcome, support and integration policies, tend to come from Nordic and continental European countries. For example, Norway is one of the countries that make the greatest efforts to provide early support. The Norwegian government offers up to 250 hours of language training to asylum seekers when they are still in the reception centres. This kind of early intervention is likely to be very effective, considerably cutting the time-to-first-job of those who will stay and start a new working life there. Along similar lines, the Danish 'Step-model' policy gradually leads new arrivals and longer-term immigrants into regular employment via intensive language training, an introduction to the workplace and subsidised initial employment, which can be combined with further on-the-job language training and up-skilling.

Sweden is one of the best performers when it comes to policies to prevent/reduce the risk of segregation of refugees. Immigrants in Sweden are carefully surveyed and their overall profiles identified, and they are matched to localities based on their individual characteristics, including their education levels and work experience. Similarly, Germany introduced an 'early intervention' scheme to assess the professional skills and abilities of asylum seekers through samples of their work, building on their declared work history.

Less farsighted seem to be the integration policies that are implemented in Mediterranean European countries. A typical case is Italy, where the dominant model is one of *"molecular*

integration" (Censis, 2016). After an initial allocation of refugees carried out by the central government, integration policies are left to local communities, which differ in terms of sensitivities and resources.

A second critical factor is the costs of emergency response and its impact on the public finances of EU countries. There have been only limited attempts up to now to quantify these costs. However, short-term expenditure required to provide support to asylum seekers can be substantial[9]. Costs can range from about €10 per day for single adults housed in reception centres to more than €300 for those without accommodation. Typically, the total cost of processing and accommodating asylum seekers can be in the range of €8,000 to €12,000 per application for the first year, although the figure may be much lower for fast-track processing (see OECD, 2015a).

It follows that, in the absence of well-functioning coordination mechanisms, the burden of the welcome process weighs more on the countries exposed to the arrival of asylum seekers. Moreover, if the European Commission's plan to relocate refugees does not work because of the refusal of some EU countries to accept them, a further need to compensate the recipient countries would arise. As already mentioned, Germany, Italy, Austria, France and the UK alone account for more than 80 percent of all first-time applicants in the EU. The Commission has already stepped up the resources it targets to refugees by €200 million for 2015 and €300 million for 2016, but this covers only emergencies, not future integration policy[10, 11].

Dealing with refugees

Although there is no simple way to manage refugee inflows, the importance of designing policies that favour the integration of refugees from the very beginning is amply recognised by international organisations (eg OECD, UNHCR). Refugee inflows can bring benefits to the economies and societies of developed countries if integration policies are well designed and effectively implemented.

First, long waiting times should be avoided, particularly for those asylum seekers that are more likely to stay. Time that refugees spend waiting reduces their chances of integration. Conversely, refugees should be provided as soon as possible with language training and integration support, eg skills assessments and civic integration courses. Refugees should be legally entitled to find a job, soon after their arrival in the destination country, while bureaucratic costs should be reduced. Not working can have detrimental effects on the ability of refugees to integrate, as their skills may deteriorate in the medium-run.

The second challenge is to prevent segregation of refugees. This can be avoided through thoughtful and well-designed allocation across the country. Allocation should include an assessment of the types of jobs available in a particular region that match the skills of migrants. The availability of housing is another important ingredient. Allocation to regions/areas with good housing availability helps to reduce the risk of social segregation. Generally speaking, it is important to promote equal access to integration services for asylum seekers across the country and to offset as much as possible regional differences in levels of support. If the levels of support vary drastically in different regions, refugees' integration prospects are determined by which part of the country they are settled in. Also, it is important to make sure

9 This includes humanitarian assistance to deliver food and shelter and basic income support; up-front expenditure associated with language training and schooling; steps to identify the skills of migrants and expenditure associated with processing asylum claims and enforcing returns. Monthly allowances provided to asylum seekers vary significantly between countries and according to housing conditions.

10 The deal with Turkey also implied transferring €6 billion in refugee aid.

11 The Commission has also set up emergency funding. This has already provided resources to Greece and Balkan countries. In February 2016, Austria too asked for extra emergency funding.

that foreign qualifications and work experience count in the country of destination. Local employers often discount and dismiss foreign qualifications and work experience, with the result that qualified refugees often struggle to secure jobs appropriate to their levels of experience. This is compounded because many flee their home countries with no proof of their qualifications. National authorities can help here by assessing and documenting newcomers' education, skills and experiences.

The third challenge is to pay early attention to vulnerable refugees. These include, for example, unaccompanied minors who arrive around the age at which compulsory schooling ends (14-17) but have little or no formal education, and need specific, appropriate support in order to catch up and integrate[12]. Also very vulnerable are refugees with mental and physical health issues. Health problems hinder a migrant's ability to get a job, learn the local language, interact with public institutions and acquire education. All these factors reduce the probability of successful integration in the country of destination. Refugees are particularly prone to mental health issues such as anxiety and depression, following their often traumatic and violent experiences back home and in flight. Host countries should assess the mental health of newcomers alongside physical evaluations, grant refugees access to regular healthcare and ensure they are able to make use of it.

The fourth challenge is the long-term monitoring of the integration of refugees. Integration can take a long time, particularly for people with low levels of education. While long-term support is expensive, it pays off in the long run, even benefiting the refugees' offspring who might have integration problems themselves. It is important that the monitoring and integration support effort is not left to governments alone. Civil society, eg employers, charities, immigrant associations, community-based organisations and trade unions, should work with the government to integrate refugees. Such organisations should cooperate in the implementation of government policies, develop effective mentorship programmes, help with the appraisal of refugees' skills and in welcoming newcomers to the community.

The Asylum Procedures Directive (2013/32/EU) tries to address many of these issues, as its objective is to create a coherent and more efficient system. However, as the directive has only applied since July 2015, it is difficult to gauge so far whether it has been effective in harmonising national asylum procedures. Carrying out an accurate evaluation is going to be one of the main challenges for the EU in the next few years.

A European approach

The lack of a single European policy on immigration implies that countries that have diverse needs, and that retain full sovereignty and accountability for migration policy, adopt positions and make choices on immigration based only on their perceived national interests. This might be at the expense of other countries. This is an example of a typical *externalities* problem studied in the economic literature: countries make choices without taking into account the spillover effects of their policies on other countries, and the result might be inherently inefficient for Europe as a whole. Differences in national refugee policies distort the functioning of European labour markets and create massive incentives for refugees to seek asylum in specific countries rather than others. Lack of harmonisation also violates some founding EU principles, such as the existence of a common European policy on the mobility of people.

On 7 June 2016, the European Commission announced a Migration Partnership Frame-

12 An example is the US Unaccompanied Refugee Minors programme, which provides intensive case management by social workers, educational support, English language training, career and educational counselling, mental health care and social integration support.

work to reinforce EU action in dealing with external work on managing migration[13]. This initiative seems to head in the right direction. It recognises that immigration policy cannot be left in the hands of national governments, but must be Europe-wide. Interestingly, 68 percent of the European population agrees that there should be a common policy on immigration (Eurobarometer, 2015). The lack of a common migration policy is more the outcome of low political and legislative integration between EU member states than the result of a lack of consensus among European citizens. The need for an integrated approach covers four main aspects: economic migration, asylum, the integration of third-country nationals and partnerships with non-EU countries. Such an integrated approach is difficult to implement because, in the current incomplete stage of European integration, it raises issues of legality and the legitimacy of supranational policymaking at EU level relative to the member states' obligations under, for example, the UN 1951 Refugee Convention and the 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees.

The migratory flows experienced in recent years are unprecedented, but also they are likely to last for decades, given the economic and demographic differences between Europe and its neighbouring continents

In these respects, the main advantage of the proposed Partnership Framework lies in the suggestion of the need for a common European approach to immigration. In particular, the proposal recognises that migratory flows experienced in recent years are unprecedented, but also that they are likely to last for decades, given the economic and demographic differences between Europe and its neighbouring continents. Acknowledging this implies that the strategy to face these challenges must be innovative and long-term.

Two points are of fundamental importance in a migration partnership framework: the need for *shared control of the external borders* of the EU and for *harmonised treatment of asylum requests*. Both these elements are essential parts of coordinated decision-making by EU countries. They eliminate incentives for countries of entry to not police the border, and prevent destination countries from using too strict requirements for asylum in order to discourage requests. Europe has taken some steps over both issues, such the agreement on the Asylum Procedures Directive, although its implementation is still to be evaluated. In terms of border control, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency, established in October 2016, will have the right to intervene even without a member state request in urgent situations that put the functioning of the Schengen area at risk. We will see how this plays out in the future. But there is also the need to further harmonise integration policies, in line with the best practises we have discussed. The challenge is for the EU to play a central role in these respects. Calling for coordinated decision-making at EU level acknowledges that EU states should give up some national sovereignty.

Another important point is the *idea of cooperation with the countries of origin* of immigrants and refugees. It is clearly impossible to handle refugee inflows, and future flows of immigrants, by looking at them only as internal problems for Europe, without trying to understand what happens in the countries of origin. How can this cooperation be enhanced?

One option would be to start new relationships with the main countries of origin, based on the 'more-for-more principle'[14]. This principle has already proved to be effective in the past, for example in the EU's relationship with eastern Europe. *Trade liberalisation* between the EU and countries of origin could also be favoured in exchange for closer bilateral cooperation in the management of flows.

Appropriate funding needs to be ensured for European measures on refugees. As we have discussed, the European Union is already funding some initiatives and supporting some member countries with specific resources, but most of the burden of welcoming refugees is carried by the member countries themselves. Clearly, the more that refugees' welcome policy becomes a European policy, the more there is an argument for a greater share of funding being found at the European level. In particular, long-term and costly policies to support origin countries would require adequate funding at European level. Thus, there is some

13 See European Commission press release: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-16-2072_en.htm.

14 Under this principle, the EU agrees to develop stronger partnerships with those neighbouring countries that make more progress towards democratic reform (European Commission, 2013).

merit in the proposals, aired in different contexts by countries such as Italy and Germany, to introduce a specific and permanent tax, the proceeds of which would be reserved to finance welcome and integration policies in European countries, and policies to support origin countries according to the more-for-more principle. The tax proceeds could be used, for example, as collateral for loans and investment in the origin countries. This would be a clear indication that migration is a primary theme of European Union policy.

Another challenge is to start an effective European-level process for evaluation of refugees' skills and competences to guide integration policy. As already stressed, there is remarkably little information on these issues. It is striking that in spite of all the debate, there is no European-wide framework for evaluating the skills of immigrants, or collecting information about their skills and qualifications on a regular basis.

Conclusions

Although it is difficult to achieve, an overall common European approach to the refugee crisis appears essential. Border control, security and harmonised management of refugees are obvious public goods for an integrated area such as the EU. It is very unlikely that national authorities acting independently could offer these public goods efficiently; the differences between European countries in terms of their policies to welcome and integrate refugees demonstrates this. In a common European approach, EU countries would share with the European Union sovereignty over migration policy. This is obviously a very difficult objective to reach at the current stage of European integration. However, failing to provide these public goods would weaken European social cohesion and the general political consensus behind the European project.

Further attempts to share the burden of refugee inflows between EU countries should be pursued. For instance, if there is insufficient consensus to revise the Dublin Regulation, and if furthermore there is no consensus on relocation of refugees, then adequate financial support must be given to first-entry countries, to underpin both their welcome and integration policies. Ensuring long-term funding is crucial. Based on the example of the European Social Fund, a European integration fund should be capitalised with adequate funds to promote full integration of those individuals and families accepted as refugees by EU member states. Integration policies should take into account the characteristics of refugees in terms of skills, education and more general cultural characteristics, because these factors also affect the cost of integration policies.

Finally, there is little doubt that difficulties in addressing the refugee crisis have more to do with political and ideological resistance than with resources. There is already public resistance to immigration, from inside and outside the EU, and less willingness to accept further flows of foreigners, who often have very different cultural features from natives. This puts pressure on governments, particularly in countries where there is already very little acceptance of immigration. There is probably limited room for manoeuvre in this respect. Rather than attempting to relocate refugees to these countries, it is probably more pragmatic to ask for compensation from the countries that do not want refugees.

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