

**Research Study  
Titled:**

**"Irregular Migration and the Demographic Crisis in  
Europe: Challenges and Opportunities"**

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## Executive Summary:

European countries are experiencing a genuine crisis due to the continuous rise in the number of migrants arriving illegally, especially through the Mediterranean Sea. These countries are caught between seemingly contradictory considerations. On one hand, they face economic pressure from labor shortages and an aging population compared to younger generations, which creates a need for specific categories of migrants. On the other hand, there is apprehension about these migrants' potential unwillingness to integrate with local communities, particularly as far-right movements rise in many European nations.

To address this, European countries are striving to curb the increasing flow of irregular migrants by implementing numerous European measures and policies aimed at safeguarding their security. However, it is evident that the European Union's solutions are predominantly security-focused rather than legislative. These measures prove ineffective as they fail to address the underlying causes and conditions surrounding irregular migration, which are rooted in economic, political, and social factors.

This study examines this phenomenon through four main axes:

### **First Axis:** *The Demographic Crisis in Europe and Its Impact on the Labor Market*

This section explores the acute demographic crisis in European nations and highlights its varying impact across different countries. It identifies the main reasons behind this crisis:

1. **Declining fertility rates** over a prolonged period, which have negatively affected the size of the child-age population.
2. **Rising life expectancy**, which ranges between 80 to 85 years in Europe and is projected to increase to 85–95 years by 2025.

Population aging and declining birth rates suggest a potential slowdown in future economic growth. It is anticipated that the decline in the European labor force will continue, posing significant new challenges.

## **Second Axis: *Analyzing Irregular Migration Flows to Europe and Migrants' Characteristics***

This section delves into the irregular migration crisis faced by European countries, driven by various factors, including geographical location, which facilitates the influx of large numbers of migrants. By examining irregular migration flows to Europe from 2015 to the present:

- In 2015, more than 1.2 million individuals, primarily Syrian refugees, entered Europe.
- The number of irregular border crossings exceeded 1.8 million.
- By 2023, approximately 355,300 individuals had entered the European Union irregularly—the highest figure since 2016.

The main reasons behind this influx include:

1. The deterioration of conditions in the Middle East, Europe, Africa, and South Asia.
2. The Russian-Ukrainian war, which has led to one of the largest displacement crises since World War II.

Moreover, the majority of migrants are young males from large families. Migration rates are higher among those who have never been married, regardless of their educational background. Women constitute only 11%, and children 15%, of irregular migrants in the European Union.

## **Third Axis: *European Measures and Policies for Addressing Asylum, Irregular Migration, and the Demographic Crisis Amid the Rise of Far-Right Movements***

Europe witnessed a historic turning point on December 20th, when the European Union reached a political agreement on regulating migration and asylum. This agreement concluded years of fraught negotiations on tightening systems and sharing responsibilities among European countries. Simultaneously, the French Parliament passed new legislation on migration, imposing stricter conditions for receiving foreigners in France.

The general consensus within the EU now emphasizes the importance of avoiding a repetition of the 2015–2016 crisis, during which nearly one million people, primarily from the Middle East, entered Europe. European countries

have implemented a series of security and legislative measures to curb the growing number of migrants and refugees. However, these measures have largely reduced the problem to a security dimension, neglecting the comprehensive approach required.

- **Security Measures:** European countries have reinforced a security-centered approach in dealing with migration. High-tech and logistical measures have been deployed to secure coastlines. One notable example is Spain's EU-funded *SAVE* project, initiated in 2002, which is among the most technologically advanced initiatives.

Additionally, in response to the rising influx of irregular migrants and the association of migration with terrorism following the September 11, 2001 attacks, the EU established the *European Agency for the Management of External Borders* in 2004, now known as *Frontex*.

- **Legislative Measures:** The legal handling of migration by European countries has not been limited to collective agreements and treaties. Individual states have also introduced their own measures, primarily aimed at protecting themselves from irregular migration in the first phase and deterring such flows in the second. Despite these efforts, European legislation has largely failed to halt migration flows. This failure can be attributed to a focus on addressing outcomes rather than tackling root causes.

**Fourth Axis: *European Success Stories in Migrant Integration*** This section highlights successful European experiences in integrating migrants, particularly in countries such as France, Germany, Portugal, and the United Kingdom. These successes were achieved through a variety of mechanisms, most notably:

- **Integration Programs:** Developing and implementing policies that are accessible and beneficial to both migrants and EU citizens with migrant backgrounds.
- **Inclusive Policies:** Adapting key policies to meet the needs of diverse communities while addressing the specific challenges of various groups.

Efforts to assist migrants in integrating should not come at the expense of measures benefiting other vulnerable or disadvantaged groups. On the contrary, such efforts should contribute to making policies more inclusive for all.

The study concluded with a set of recommendations to mitigate the crisis of irregular migration to Europe, divided into two main axes: the first focuses on recommendations at the individual level, while the second pertains to institutions and the existing legislative and legal frameworks.

### **Introduction:**

The European continent is currently facing a series of challenges that cast a negative shadow on its present and future. Perhaps the most critical among these challenges is the ongoing transformation in the demographics of the "Old Continent," particularly in light of the significant decline in the workforce. This issue is likely to exacerbate the already struggling European economy, which has been impacted by the Russian-Ukrainian war and escalating tensions among global powers.

This challenge is closely tied to the growing phenomenon of irregular migration currently witnessed across the continent, which is experiencing a substantial influx of refugees and irregular migrants. This influx presents numerous economic, social, security, and political challenges. In response, the European Union has implemented policies aimed at managing irregular migration flows and regulating the status of refugees within European countries. Analysis shows that some European nations have successfully managed migration flows and even leveraged the influx of migrants to address labor market gaps caused by the demographic crisis. This is the focus of the current study.

Based on the above, the study is divided into four main axes:

1. The first axis examines the demographic crisis in Europe and its impact on the labor market.
2. The second axis analyzes irregular migration flows and the characteristics of migrants.

3. The third axis focuses on European policies for managing migration and their effects on the demographic crisis.
4. The fourth and final axis highlights successful case studies of the social and economic integration of migrants, concluding with recommendations aimed at transforming challenges into sustainable opportunities.

## Research Problem:

The research problem stems from the fact that the continent is facing multiple crises, including declining fertility rates, rising aging populations, and irregular migration flows. These issues have a negative impact on European economies. In this context, the study aims to analyze the demographic crisis in Europe as well as the flows of irregular migration. The goal is to explore how these crises can be addressed through managing irregular migration and leveraging it to bridge the demographic gap.

From this problem arises a key research question: **How can irregular migration contribute to bridging the demographic gap and enhancing the European economy?**

This main question is further divided into several sub-questions:

1. To what extent does the demographic crisis in Europe affect the labor market?
2. How can irregular migration flows be understood, and what are the characteristics of migrants?
3. What are the European policies for managing migration, and how do these policies impact the demographic crisis?
4. Are there European countries that have successfully achieved the social and economic integration of migrants?
5. How can challenges be transformed into sustainable opportunities?

## Objectives:

This study aims to:

1. Analyze and review the demographic crisis in Europe, providing a comprehensive understanding of its causes and its impact on the labor market.
2. Examine the flows of irregular migration in Europe and analyze the characteristics and conditions of migrants.

3. Assess European migration policies and their role in addressing the demographic crisis.
4. Highlight and analyze successful cases of social and economic integration of migrants in Europe.
5. Provide concrete and practical recommendations to transform migration-related challenges in Europe into sustainable opportunities for host societies.

### **Methodology:**

The research primarily relies on collecting and analyzing statistical and desk data to shed light on the reality of the demographic crisis in Europe and its impact on the labor market. It also aims to clarify indicators related to irregular migration flows.

Additionally, a comparative approach has been employed to:

- Compare the extent of the demographic crisis across different European countries and how its effects vary from one nation to another.
- Examine the differences in policies addressing irregular migration and how some countries have successfully managed and utilized migration to boost their economies, whereas others have failed to do so.

### **First: An Overview of the Demographic Crisis in Europe and Its Impact on the Labor Market**

As of November 2024, the population of Europe stood at **719,918,756**, with an annual growth rate of **-0.103%**<sup>1</sup>, underscoring the severity of one of the continent's most pressing challenges: its demographic structure. Europe is

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<sup>1</sup> **Population today**, Europe Population, 2024, Available at : [https://search.app?link=https%3A%2F%2Fpopulationtoday.com%2Fcontinents%2Feurope%2F&utm\\_campaign=aga&utm\\_source=agsadl2%2Csh%2F%2F%2Fm2%2F4](https://search.app?link=https%3A%2F%2Fpopulationtoday.com%2Fcontinents%2Feurope%2F&utm_campaign=aga&utm_source=agsadl2%2Csh%2F%2F%2Fm2%2F4)



grappling with aging populations and an increasing proportion of individuals aged 65 and above, which adversely affects the size of its workforce<sup>2</sup>.

This demographic shift exerts significant pressures, including:

- The necessity to provide healthcare services for the elderly.
- Increased budget allocations for pensions.

Such pressures inevitably impact economic growth within European countries. For instance, the proportion of elderly people rose from **8% in 1950** to **23% in 2020**, and it is projected to reach **28% by 2050**<sup>3</sup>.

Based on the above, this section will:

1. Analyze the current state of the demographic crisis in Europe and its underlying causes.
2. Examine the impact of this crisis on the labor market.

### **1) The Demographic Crisis in Europe:**

European countries are facing a complex demographic crisis, varying in severity and impact from one country and region to another. Several European nations are projected to experience a decline in their populations in the coming years. For example, countries like Bulgaria, Greece, Croatia, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Poland, and Romania are expected to continue this trend until 2030.

Conversely, other countries such as Denmark, Ireland, Cyprus, Luxembourg, Malta, and Sweden are anticipated to witness population growth during the same period. However, overall, Europe's share of the global population has significantly declined and is expected to continue shrinking.

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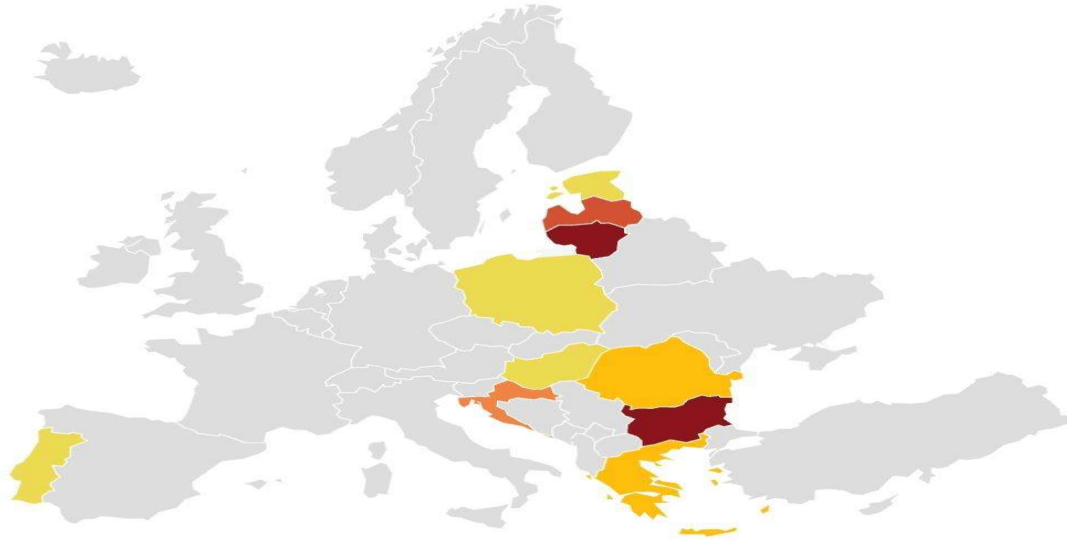
<sup>2</sup> Espon, **OVERLAp – Overlapping crises (re)shaping the future of regional labour markets**, 2023, Available at : <https://search.app?link=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.espon.eu%2Fprojects%2Foverlap-overlapping-crises-reshaping-future-regional-labour> -

<sup>3</sup> رشود بن محمد، أوروبا أمام تحديات ديموغرافية صعبة الاقتصادية، 2020، الرابط التالي :

[https://www.aleqt.com/2020/01/19/article\\_1747866](https://www.aleqt.com/2020/01/19/article_1747866).

In 2022, Europe's population accounted for **6%** of the world's population, a

### Percentage decline 2020-2050



Many of the world's nations with declining populations are in Europe.

sharp decrease from **12% in 1960**, with projections indicating a drop to below **4% by 2070**.

Moreover, the population of the European Union in January 2015 was approximately **508 million**<sup>4</sup>, but by 2024, it had declined to around **450 million**<sup>5</sup>. This decrease coincides with a drop in fertility rates, which reached

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<sup>4</sup>EuroStat, "First Population Estimates," 2015, Available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/2995521/6903510/3-10072015-AP-EN.pdf/d2bfb01f-6ac5-4775-8a7e-7b104c1146d0>.

<sup>5</sup>"EU Population Increases Again in 2024 – Eurostat, ec.europa.eu, 2024, Available at : <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/w/ddn-20240711-1> .

**3.8 million children** born in 2022, at an average of **1.48 children per woman**—a figure that has been consistently declining since 1950<sup>6</sup>.

Subsequently, the following section addresses the causes of population aging in Europe, which are as follows:

**A. Declining Fertility Rates:** The prolonged decline in fertility rates negatively impacts the population of children. This is currently evident across Europe and can be attributed to several factors, including individualistic tendencies and the increasing participation of women in the workforce. Additionally, Europeans have long adopted the pattern of small families, which is apparent when tracking fertility rates across European countries from the 1950s to the present day. This trend is expected to persist until 2050<sup>7</sup>. For example, fertility rates in England and Wales have experienced a sharp decline, with the average number of children per woman dropping to **1.44 in 2023**, the lowest level ever recorded<sup>8</sup>.

**B. Increasing Life Expectancy:** This can be attributed to advancements in healthcare systems and services, leading to longer life spans across European nations. Current life expectancy in Europe ranges between **80 and 85 years**, and this figure is projected to rise further to **85–95 years by 2050**.

## **2) The Impact of the Demographic Crisis in Europe on the Labor Market:**

To begin with, it is important to note that demographic factors do not solely determine the fate of economic growth. However, their role in supporting growth potential cannot be overlooked. Population aging, coupled with

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<sup>6</sup>Servet Yanatma, “**Europe’s Fertility Crisis: Which Countries Are Having Fewer Babies?**,” euronews (Euronews.com, September 28, 2024), Available at: <https://www.euronews.com/health/2024/09/28/europes-fertility-crisis-which-european-country-is-having-the-fewest-babies>.

<sup>7</sup>أيمن زهري، هل تحل الهجرة مشكلة انخفاض الخصوبة والتعمر السكاني في أوروبا، آفاق إجتماعية، العدد 4، 2022، ص 31 : 33.

<sup>8</sup> Geoff Riley, **From High Costs to Late Parenthood: Unpacking the UK’s Record-Low Birth Rate**, tutor2u, 2024, Available at : [https://search.app?link=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.tutor2u.net%2F%2Fblog%2Ffrom-high-costs-to-late-parenthood-unpacking-the-uks-record-low-birth-rate&utm\\_campaign=aga&utm\\_source=agsadl2%2Csh%2Ffx%2Fgs%2Fm2%2F4](https://search.app?link=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.tutor2u.net%2F%2Fblog%2Ffrom-high-costs-to-late-parenthood-unpacking-the-uks-record-low-birth-rate&utm_campaign=aga&utm_source=agsadl2%2Csh%2Ffx%2Fgs%2Fm2%2F4)

declining birth rates in European countries, indicates a likelihood of economic growth slowing in the future<sup>9</sup>.

Moreover, the increasing life expectancy of individuals, accompanied by better health conditions, has led many citizens to work for longer periods<sup>10</sup>. Despite Europe experiencing higher rates of immigration compared to emigration, the gradual decline in the workforce within European countries is expected to persist, especially with the shrinking working-age population and rising aging rates.

This scenario introduces new challenges, such as:

- **Pressures on labor markets and welfare states:** A shrinking working-age population increases the dependency ratio of the elderly.
- **Higher financial burdens per capita of public debt:** The aging population necessitates additional resources, including adapting workplaces and enhancing social welfare and public health systems.

The decline in the workforce and the increasing dependency ratio in the EU can be observed over recent years. For instance:

- In 2015, the working-age population in Europe represented **65.5%**<sup>11</sup> of the total population, which was projected to decline to **56.6%** by 2060.
- By 2023, this percentage had already dropped to **63.8%**<sup>12</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> ADAM HAYES, **How Demographics Drive the Economy**, Investopedia, 2023, Available at : [https://search.app?link=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.investopedia.com%2Farticles%2Finvesting%2F012315%2Fhow-demographics-drive-economy.asp&utm\\_campaign=aga&utm\\_source=agsadl2%2Csh%2Ffx%2Ffgs%2Fm2%2F4](https://search.app?link=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.investopedia.com%2Farticles%2Finvesting%2F012315%2Fhow-demographics-drive-economy.asp&utm_campaign=aga&utm_source=agsadl2%2Csh%2Ffx%2Ffgs%2Fm2%2F4)

<sup>10</sup> **EU**, Demographic change In Europe, 2023, Available at : [https://search.app?link=https%3A%2F%2Feuropa.eu%2Feurobarometer%2Fsurveys%2Fdetail%2F3112&utm\\_campaign=aga&utm\\_source=agsadl2%2Csh%2Ffx%2Ffgs%2Fm2%2F4](https://search.app?link=https%3A%2F%2Feuropa.eu%2Feurobarometer%2Fsurveys%2Fdetail%2F3112&utm_campaign=aga&utm_source=agsadl2%2Csh%2Ffx%2Ffgs%2Fm2%2F4)

<sup>11</sup> **European Commission**, “Economic and Budgetary Projections for the 28 EU Member States (2013-2060),” 2015, [https://ec.europa.eu/economy\\_finance/publications/european\\_economy/2015/pdf/ee3\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/economy_finance/publications/european_economy/2015/pdf/ee3_en.pdf).

<sup>12</sup> **OECD**, “Working Age Population,” OECD, 2024, Available at : <https://www.oecd.org/en/data/indicators/working-age-population.html?oecdcontrol-d6804ae080-var1=OECD%7CEU27&oecdcontrol-f75fe24c3f-var3=2015&oecdcontrol-f75fe24c3f-var4=2023>.

This reduction in the workforce has been accompanied by an increase in the elderly dependency ratio, rising from **29% in 2015**<sup>13</sup> to **33% in 2022**<sup>14</sup>.

Therefore, to support economic growth, the working-age population must increase, and labor force participation rates must rise to contribute to greater productivity. In this context, crises experienced by nations adversely affect their economies, rendering them more vulnerable. For example, the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the fragility of economies in the face of health shocks.

While the pandemic had a noticeable—albeit mostly temporary—impact on entrenched demographic trends, its effects included a sudden decline in population and life expectancy. However, the long-term trend of gradual increases in life expectancy resumed shortly thereafter. By November 2021, most countries had returned to pre-pandemic life expectancy levels. In the European Union, life expectancy in that year was **82.8 years for women** and **77.2 years for men**.

Additionally, the pandemic significantly affected the European and global economy. However, other phenomena, such as demographic shifts, have more enduring impacts. In this regard, migration can play a pivotal role in mitigating the effects of a shrinking working-age population and help address this issue<sup>15</sup>.

Based on the above, the population crisis in Europe could lead to a **4% reduction in GDP by 2040**<sup>16</sup>. Examining the countries most affected by this

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<sup>13</sup>OECD, “Pensions at a Glance 2015 OECD and G20 Indicators,” OECD, 2015, Available at : [https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/old-age-dependency-ratio\\_5jrqp3fbwvd.pdf](https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/old-age-dependency-ratio_5jrqp3fbwvd.pdf).

<sup>14</sup>EuroStat, “Population Projections in the EU - Statistics Explained,” Europa.eu, 2023, Available at: [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Population\\_projections\\_in\\_the\\_EU#Age\\_dependency\\_ratios](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Population_projections_in_the_EU#Age_dependency_ratios).

<sup>15</sup> EUROPEANCOMMISSION, **The impact of demographic change In a changing environments**, 2023, p3:7,16:18

<sup>16</sup> RYAN HOGG, **Europe’s population crisis could shave 4% off its GDP by 2040, Morgan Stanley warns, and the options to solve It aren’t good**, FORTUNE, 2024, Available at : <https://search.app?link=https%3A%2F%2Ffortune.com%2F2024%2F10%2F14%2F2Feuropes->

crisis reveals that Italy, Spain, and Germany are particularly impacted by demographic changes.

For example, even if Germany raises the retirement age to **68 years** and implements various measures to increase labor force participation rates among women, older workers, and foreign nationals to levels observed in Sweden, it would still require **200,000 migrants annually**. However, if Germany relies solely on migration to mitigate the effects of demographic change on the labor market, it would need **482,000 migrants per year**.

The same applies to Italy and Spain, with required annual migration flows of **414,000** and **338,000**, respectively, on average. This also holds true for France, which benefits from a comparatively more favorable demographic trend. With labor market reforms to boost participation, Italy would only need **89,000 migrants annually**, while Spain's requirement would drop to **131,000 migrants per year**.

Moreover, the working-age population is declining in key Eastern European labor-exporting countries. By 2050, the population aged 20–64 is expected to shrink by one-third in Bulgaria, by **-26%** in Poland, and by **-22%** in Romania<sup>17</sup>.

The four largest European economies—France, Germany, Italy, and the United Kingdom—have experienced declining growth rates in recent decades. Increased life expectancy and declining fertility rates have gradually led to an aging population. These demographic changes directly affect economic growth through decisions related to overall savings and labor supply and indirectly through the taxes required to fund pension systems<sup>18</sup>.

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[population-crisis-gdp-2040-morgan-stanley%2F&utm\\_campaign=aga&utm\\_source=agsadl2%2Csh%2Ffx%2Fgs%2Fm2%2F4](https://search.app?link=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.allianz.com%2Fen%2Feconomic_research%2Finsights%2Fpublications%2Fspecials_fmo%2F2024_02_14_European-Labour-Markets.html&utm_campaign=aga&utm_source=agsadl2%2Csh%2Ffx%2Fgs%2Fm2%2F4)

<sup>17</sup> Allianz, **European labor markets: Migration matters**, 2024, Available at : [https://search.app?link=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.allianz.com%2Fen%2Feconomic\\_research%2Finsights%2Fpublications%2Fspecials\\_fmo%2F2024\\_02\\_14\\_European-Labour-Markets.html&utm\\_campaign=aga&utm\\_source=agsadl2%2Csh%2Ffx%2Fgs%2Fm2%2F4](https://search.app?link=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.allianz.com%2Fen%2Feconomic_research%2Finsights%2Fpublications%2Fspecials_fmo%2F2024_02_14_European-Labour-Markets.html&utm_campaign=aga&utm_source=agsadl2%2Csh%2Ffx%2Fgs%2Fm2%2F4)

<sup>18</sup> Thomas F. Cooley, Espen Henriksen, Charlie Nusbaum, **Demographic obstacles to European Growth**, 2024, Available at : [https://search.app?link=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.sciencedirect.com%2Fscience%2Farticle%2Fpii%2FS0014292124001582&utm\\_campaign=aga&utm\\_source=agsadl2%2Csh%2Ffx%2Fgs%2Fm2%2F4](https://search.app?link=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.sciencedirect.com%2Fscience%2Farticle%2Fpii%2FS0014292124001582&utm_campaign=aga&utm_source=agsadl2%2Csh%2Ffx%2Fgs%2Fm2%2F4)

In the case of Ukraine, the substantial damage caused by the large-scale Russian invasion is likely to slow growth from **5.3% last year** to **3.2% this year** and **2% in 2025**<sup>19</sup>.

## **Second: Analysis of Irregular Migration Flows to Europe and Migrants' Characteristics**

European countries are facing unprecedented flows of irregular migration. This phenomenon can be attributed to several factors, including geographic location, which facilitates the influx of large numbers of migrants, and the commitment of European Union (EU) countries to free movement within most EU states<sup>20</sup>.

It is important to note that while all refugees are migrants, not all migrants are refugees. Moreover, most irregular migrants initially enter Europe legally on short-term visas but choose to remain within the EU for economic reasons after their visas expire<sup>21</sup>.

This section will analyze irregular migration flows, delve into the reasons behind these flows, and examine the characteristics of the migrants.

### **1) Analysis of Irregular Migration Flows to Europe:**

Examining irregular migration flows to Europe from 2015 to the present reveals significant trends and shifts:

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<sup>19</sup> **World Bank Group**, Europe and Central Asia: Economic Stability Amidst Sluggish Growth, 2024, Available at : [https://search.app?link=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.worldbank.org%2Fen%2Fnews%2Fpress-release%2F2024%2F10%2F17%2Feurope-and-central-asia-economic-stability-amidst-sluggish-growth&utm\\_campaign=aga&utm\\_source=agsadl2%2Csh%2Fx%2Fgs%2Fm2%2F4](https://search.app?link=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.worldbank.org%2Fen%2Fnews%2Fpress-release%2F2024%2F10%2F17%2Feurope-and-central-asia-economic-stability-amidst-sluggish-growth&utm_campaign=aga&utm_source=agsadl2%2Csh%2Fx%2Fgs%2Fm2%2F4)

<sup>20</sup> **Swedish Institute For European Policy Studies**, Irregular Immigration In The European Union, 2016,p 1 :5

<sup>21</sup> **Migration and Home Affairs**, Irregular migration and return 2024, Available at : [https://search.app?link=https%3A%2F%2Fhome-affairs.ec.europa.eu%2Fpolicies%2Fmigration-and-asylum%2Firregular-migration-and-return\\_en&utm\\_campaign=aga&utm\\_source=agsadl2%2Csh%2Fx%2Fgs%2Fm2%2F4](https://search.app?link=https%3A%2F%2Fhome-affairs.ec.europa.eu%2Fpolicies%2Fmigration-and-asylum%2Firregular-migration-and-return_en&utm_campaign=aga&utm_source=agsadl2%2Csh%2Fx%2Fgs%2Fm2%2F4)

- In **2015**, over **1.2 million people** entered Europe seeking asylum, most of them Syrian refugees<sup>22</sup>. Additionally, the number of irregular border crossings exceeded **1.8 million**, the highest figure ever recorded.
- Since then, the number of irregular border crossings has significantly decreased. However, in **2023**, approximately **355,300 people** entered the European Union irregularly, marking the highest figure since 2016<sup>23</sup>. In the first half of **2024**, **53,270 irregular migrants**<sup>24</sup> arrived in Europe.
- The **Eastern Mediterranean route**, particularly from Turkey to Greece, remains the most prevalent path for migrants and asylum seekers. For example:
  - In **2015**, over **90,000 irregular migrants** arrived in Greece by land and sea.
  - In **2016**, the total number of arrivals dropped significantly to **387,895 irregular migrants** reaching Europe via land and sea.
- **2020** marked the lowest level of irregular migration to the EU since 2013, primarily due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, by **2021**, irregular border crossings increased by **60%** compared to 2020, with **199,900 migrants** detected.

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<sup>22</sup> Tara Varma, Sophie Roehse, **Understanding Europe's turn on migration**, Brookings, 2024, Available at : [https://search.app?link=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.brookings.edu%2Farticles%2Funderstanding-europes-turn-on-migration%2F&utm\\_campaign=aga&utm\\_source=agsadl2%2Csh%2Fx%2Fgs%2Fm2%2F4](https://search.app?link=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.brookings.edu%2Farticles%2Funderstanding-europes-turn-on-migration%2F&utm_campaign=aga&utm_source=agsadl2%2Csh%2Fx%2Fgs%2Fm2%2F4)

<sup>23</sup> **European Parliamentary**, Countering Irregular migration: better EU border management, Available [https://search.app?link=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.europarl.europa.eu%2Ftopics%2Fen%2Farticle%2F20170627STO78419%2Fcountering-irregular-migration-better-eu-border-management&utm\\_campaign=aga&utm\\_source=agsadl2%2Csh%2Fx%2Fgs%2Fm2%2F4](https://search.app?link=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.europarl.europa.eu%2Ftopics%2Fen%2Farticle%2F20170627STO78419%2Fcountering-irregular-migration-better-eu-border-management&utm_campaign=aga&utm_source=agsadl2%2Csh%2Fx%2Fgs%2Fm2%2F4)

<sup>24</sup> **European Council**, EU migration and asylum policy, 2024, Available at : [https://search.app?link=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.consilium.europa.eu%2Fen%2Fpolicies%2Fen-migration-policy%2F&utm\\_campaign=aga&utm\\_source=agsadl2%2Csh%2Fx%2Fgs%2Fm2%2F4](https://search.app?link=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.consilium.europa.eu%2Fen%2Fpolicies%2Fen-migration-policy%2F&utm_campaign=aga&utm_source=agsadl2%2Csh%2Fx%2Fgs%2Fm2%2F4)



Comparing migration data over a five-year period from 2015 to 2020 shows that, by **2020**, Europe was home to approximately **87 million migrants**, reflecting a **16% increase** since 2015<sup>25</sup>..

This analysis underscores the fluctuating trends of irregular migration and highlights the Eastern Mediterranean route as a key entry point for migrants and asylum seekers entering Europe.

When examining irregular migration routes, **Eastern and Southeastern Europe** emerge as key transit regions characterized by significant irregular migration flows. These movements are often facilitated by smugglers, particularly for migrants attempting to reach Western and Northern Europe.

- The **Western Balkan route**, along with other routes such as those through **Belarus**, has experienced substantial irregular migration flows.
- The **Mediterranean Sea** remains the most heavily trafficked route for migrants heading to Europe.

In addition to these routes, irregular migrants have been used as a political tool in some contexts.

Regarding irregular movements within Europe, the **UK Home Office** reported in **2021** that **28,526 people** arrived irregularly in small boats from France to the UK. This marks a significant increase compared to:

- **843 people** detected in **2019**.
- **1,843 people** detected in **2018**.

Most of these migrants crossed the **English Channel** and were originally from **Iran, Iraq, Eritrea, or Syria**<sup>26</sup>.

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<sup>25</sup> Fiamma Nirenstein, **The Immigration Crisis in Europe**, Jerusalem Center for Security and Foreign Affairs (JCFA), 2017, Available at : [https://search.app?link=https%3A%2F%2Fjcpa.org%2Fimmigration-to-europe%2Fthe-immigration-crisis-in-europe%2F&utm\\_campaign=aga&utm\\_source=agsadl2%2Csh%2Fx%2Fgs%2Fm2%2F4](https://search.app?link=https%3A%2F%2Fjcpa.org%2Fimmigration-to-europe%2Fthe-immigration-crisis-in-europe%2F&utm_campaign=aga&utm_source=agsadl2%2Csh%2Fx%2Fgs%2Fm2%2F4)

<sup>26</sup> **MIGRATION DATA Portal**, Irregular migration, 2022, Available at : [https://search.app?link=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.migrationdataportal.org%2Fthemes%2Firregular-migration&utm\\_campaign=aga&utm\\_source=agsadl2%2Csh%2Fx%2Fgs%2Fm2%2F4](https://search.app?link=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.migrationdataportal.org%2Fthemes%2Firregular-migration&utm_campaign=aga&utm_source=agsadl2%2Csh%2Fx%2Fgs%2Fm2%2F4)

Irregular migration remains one of the major challenges facing the region, characterized by persistent flows facilitated by well-established smuggling networks.

- In **2022**, Europe recorded the highest number of irregular arrivals since 2016, with over **189,000 migrants** entering via land and sea.
- Smuggling networks play a crucial role in enabling attempts to reach Northern, Western, and Southern Europe, often charging high fees while exposing migrants to numerous risks.

Migration to Europe has been steadily increasing over the years. In **2022**, the total number of non-EU citizens entering the EU reached **5.1 million**, while the number of irregular border crossings rose to approximately **380,000** in **2023**—the highest figure recorded since 2016<sup>27</sup>.

According to data from the **United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)** in **September 2024**, the number of refugees and asylum seekers in Europe rose again in **2023**. Syrians and Afghans constitute the largest groups of asylum seekers:

- **209,000 asylum applications** were submitted by Syrians.
- **155,000 asylum applications** were submitted by Afghans by the end of 2023<sup>28</sup>.

## **2) Analysis of the Causes and Characteristics of Migrant Flows:**

Migrants and refugees from Africa, the Middle East, and South Asia represent one of the greatest challenges for Europe since the debt crisis. Europe is considered the most perilous destination for irregular migration globally<sup>29</sup>.

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<sup>27</sup> **European Parliamentary**, The EU response to migration and asylum, 2024, Available at : [https://search.app?link=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.europarl.europa.eu%2Ftopics%2Fen%2Farticle%2F20170629STO78629%2Fthe-eu-response-to-migration-and-asylum&utm\\_campaign=aga&utm\\_source=agsadl2%2Csh%2Ffx%2Fgs%2Fm2%2Fm2](https://search.app?link=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.europarl.europa.eu%2Ftopics%2Fen%2Farticle%2F20170629STO78629%2Fthe-eu-response-to-migration-and-asylum&utm_campaign=aga&utm_source=agsadl2%2Csh%2Ffx%2Fgs%2Fm2%2Fm2)

<sup>28</sup> المركز الأوروبي لدراسات مكافحة الإرهاب والاستخبارات، اللجوء والهجرة غير الشرعية في الاتحاد الأوروبي وتداخلها مع التطرف والإرهاب، ٢٠٢٤، الرابط التالي : <https://n9.cl/f45f0x>

**Causes of Irregular Migration Flows:** Two primary reasons contribute to the influx of irregular migrants:

**1. Political Instability in the Middle East, Africa, and South Asia:**

Political turmoil in these regions has significantly increased irregular migration to Europe. For instance:

In **2011**, the number of detected cases of illegal border crossings surged as thousands of Tunisians arrived on the Italian island of Lampedusa following the outbreak of revolutions.

Sub-Saharan Africans fleeing Libya in the aftermath of the Gaddafi era contributed to further migration flows.

Additionally, the numbers of Syrian, Afghan, and Eritrean migrants have steadily risen in subsequent years, driven by conflicts and instability in their home countries<sup>30</sup>..

The second cause is the **Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022**, which led to one of the largest and fastest displacement crises in Europe since World War II. The invasion resulted in millions of Ukrainians fleeing to neighboring countries.

By the end of 2022:

- Ukraine had become the source of approximately **5.7 million refugees**, making it the second-largest refugee population in the world, after the Syrian Arab Republic.
- Around **2.6 million Ukrainians** were hosted in neighboring countries such as Poland, Moldova, and the Czech Republic.
- An additional **3 million** were hosted in other European countries and beyond.

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<sup>29</sup> خالد خميس السحاتي، الاتحاد الأوروبي والهجرة غير الشرعية: قضايا وتحديات، مجلة السياسة الدولية، ٢٠٢٤، الرابط التالي: [https://search.app?link=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.siyassa.org.eg%2FNews%2F21797.aspx&utm\\_campaign=aga&utm\\_source=agsadl2%2Csh%2Ffx%2Fgs%2Fm2%2F4](https://search.app?link=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.siyassa.org.eg%2FNews%2F21797.aspx&utm_campaign=aga&utm_source=agsadl2%2Csh%2Ffx%2Fgs%2Fm2%2F4)

<sup>30</sup> Jeanne Park, **Europe's Migration Crisis**, COUNCIL on Foreign Relations, 2015, Available at : <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/europes-migration-crisis>

In this context, **Germany** hosted approximately **2 million refugees**, the largest refugee population in Europe, representing **7% of all refugees worldwide**. By the end of 2022, most refugees in Germany were from **Ukraine** and the **Syrian Arab Republic**, followed by refugees from **the Russian Federation, Poland, and France**<sup>31</sup> in second, third, and fourth places, respectively.

### **Characteristics of Migrants:**

The distribution of male and female migrants in European countries is nearly equal. However, certain countries, such as **Ukraine**, have a higher proportion of female migrants. Conversely, **Italy** and **Portugal** are the only two European countries where male migrants outnumber females.

In this context, the majority of migrants tend to be **young males** from large families. Migration is particularly common among **unmarried individuals**, regardless of their educational background. Women constitute only **11%**, and children **15%**, of irregular migrants in the European Union.

**Occupations of Migrants:** Irregular migrants are predominantly employed in key sectors, including:

- Sales and services
- Agriculture and fishing
- Industrial, chemical, and food processing operations

**Education Levels:** The educational level of irregular migrants is typically relatively low. Most migrants come from countries experiencing significant turmoil.

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<sup>31</sup> **UN migration**, Migration and Migrants: Regional Dimensions and Development, 2023, Available at : <https://worldmigrationreport.iom.int/what-we-do/world-migration-report-2024-chapter-3/europe>

This trend is evidenced by the impact of the **Russian-Ukrainian war** and the **unrest in the Arab region** on irregular migration flows to Europe. For instance, **Syria** was the leading source of refugees in **2013, 2014, and 2015**<sup>32</sup>.

### **Third: European Measures and Policies for Addressing Asylum, Irregular Migration, and the Demographic Crisis**

The issue of migration and asylum holds significant importance for European policymakers, especially as Europe has borne the greatest burden of being the primary destination for asylum and migration since World War II.

In **2020**, European leaders agreed on the final version of the **European Pact on Migration and Asylum**, which serves as the primary framework for governing how EU agencies and national governments address migration and asylum-related issues in the coming years<sup>33</sup>.

Despite the advantages brought by migrant flows to EU countries, they have also become one of the most contentious political issues within most European nations, fueling a significant political divide between the right and left in recent years. The political struggle over migration and asylum has played a major role in capturing the attention of the European political class, leading to increased focus on immigration laws and the formulation of a European Pact on Migration and Asylum. This has become a central aspect of current European unification policies.

According to the European Commission, the new Migration and Asylum Pact provides a fresh start for managing these issues. It emphasizes that no member state should bear a disproportionate share of the responsibility, and all member states should contribute to solidarity on a permanent basis. Furthermore, the pact offers a comprehensive approach that integrates policies in the areas of migration, asylum, integration, and border management. It aims to ensure faster and smoother deportation procedures,

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<sup>32</sup> محمد احمد علي حسنين، خصائص المصريين المهاجرين هجرة غير شرعية إلى أوروبا وآثار الهجرة ومستقبلها، حوليات الآداب والعلوم الإجتماعية، حولية 41، 2020

<sup>33</sup> **Rescue.org**, What is the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum?, 2024, Available at : [https://search.app?link=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.rescue.org%2Fen%2Farticle%2Fwhat-eu-pact-migration-and-asylum&utm\\_campaign=aga&utm\\_source=agsadl2%2Csh%2Ffx%2Fgs%2Fm2%2F4](https://search.app?link=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.rescue.org%2Fen%2Farticle%2Fwhat-eu-pact-migration-and-asylum&utm_campaign=aga&utm_source=agsadl2%2Csh%2Ffx%2Fgs%2Fm2%2F4)

stronger governance of migration and border policies, supported by modern information technology systems, and more effective agencies.

The pact's primary goal is to reduce unsafe and irregular migration routes while promoting sustainable and safe legal pathways. It aims to regulate migration by ensuring that most migrants enter the EU legally, aligning with the labor market needs of the EU and addressing security threats, particularly in the face of ongoing terrorist threats<sup>34</sup>.

However, **2023** served as a wake-up call for EU officials, marking the worst year since **2015** in terms of the number of irregular migrants arriving in the European Union.

From this perspective, the issue of migration and asylum has risen to the top of the agenda for European institutions. Over the past months, Brussels hosted meetings of the interior ministers of the European bloc aimed at reaching an agreement to reform migration and asylum policies. These meetings involved marathon negotiations amidst political and human rights disputes. However, during the session of the Justice and Home Affairs Council last June, EU member states reached an agreement to establish a negotiating position on the proposed Migration and Asylum Pact, which had been introduced in September 2020, with the hope of finalizing a new agreement by the end of the year<sup>35</sup>.

Thus, Europe witnessed a pivotal moment in its history on **December 20th** of last year, when the European Union reached a political agreement on regulating migration and asylum, ending years of contentious negotiations over tightening systems and sharing responsibilities among member states. This coincided with the French Parliament's approval of new migration legislation, resulting in stricter conditions for accepting foreigners in France.

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<sup>34</sup> COMMUNICATION DE LA COMMISSION AU PARLEMENT EUROPÉEN, AU CONSEIL, AU COMITÉ ÉCONOMIQUE ET SOCIAL EUROPÉEN ET AU COMITÉ DES RÉGIONS, sur un nouveau pacte sur la migration et l'asile, Bruxelles, le 23.9.2020.

[https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:85ff8b4f-ff13-11ea-b44f-01aa75ed71a1.0003.02/DOC\\_3&format=PDF1](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:85ff8b4f-ff13-11ea-b44f-01aa75ed71a1.0003.02/DOC_3&format=PDF1)

<sup>35</sup> اندرو أنبير شوقي، "تحولات يمينية.. مخاطر القيود الأوروبية الجديدة على الهجرة واللجوء"، مركز المستقبل لأبحاث والدراسات المتقدمة، تاريخ النشر: 12 يناير 2024م، متاح على الرابط التالي: <https://futureuae.com/cart/Mainpage/Item/8944/>

It appears that the general stance within the EU is now focused on ensuring that the crises of **2015 and 2016** do not repeat. It is worth noting that European countries have implemented a range of security and legislative measures to control the flow of irregular migrants. However, these measures have largely reduced the issue to a security dimension, overlooking the comprehensive approach required.

## 1) Security Measures

Security measures are based on the principal assumption that there is a direct correlation between irregular migration and the risks and challenges European countries have faced in recent years. Consequently, this phenomenon cannot be addressed or overcome without implementing a set of strict measures and procedures<sup>36</sup>.

This rationale explains why European Union countries, especially those with active far-right political parties, have established detention centers specifically for irregular migrants apprehended along European shores. Migrants are held in these centers until they are deported to their countries of origin.

It is worth noting that these detention centers often lack the minimum required standards for humane detention.

In the context of migration becoming a security issue, European countries established the **European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders** in **2004**, now known as **Frontex**. This was in response to the increasing flow of irregular migrants and the association of migration with terrorism following the **September 11, 2001 attacks**.

All European measures and solutions addressing migration from the southern Mediterranean have firmly anchored security as the primary framework for addressing challenges originating from migrant regions, whether within European borders or beyond.

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<sup>36</sup> - نادية ليتيم، فتحة ليتيم "البعد الأمني في مكافحة الهجرة الشرعية إلى أوروبا"، مجلة السياسة الدولية، العدد 183، يناير 2011، ص 26

This security-focused approach has become a fixed foundation in tackling imbalances caused by migration. Therefore, it is essential to assess the effectiveness of the traditional European approach in dealing with asylum and migration phenomena.

In reality, European countries have effectively adopted the logic and practices of the far-right, particularly concerning the connection between preventing migrant inflows and addressing the demographic crisis. This approach serves as a way to deflect attention from the real causes behind the failure of European governments' economic and social policies.

These measures aim to protect against the negative repercussions of high migration rates, especially given the intertwining of migration issues with terrorism threats. A set of concerns has emerged, including the rise of what has come to be known as "human trafficking gangs," which see migrants and irregular migration as lucrative opportunities for financial gain.

European countries are also apprehensive about terrorist networks exploiting the vulnerable conditions of these migrants to plan and carry out targeted attacks, using migrants as tools for such actions. This concern is exacerbated by the dire social conditions in which migrants live and the lack of genuine attention to improving their living situations<sup>37</sup>.

## 2) Legislative Measures:

In the context of legislative measures, the **Schengen Agreement** stands as the most exemplary and successful model for organizing European security. This agreement primarily focuses on the free movement of wealth and capital, while placing less emphasis on the free movement of people. It has significantly contributed to coordinating European migration policies in a deterrent manner, heavily influenced by security and judicial concerns. The agreement prioritizes security monitoring in its various forms, establishing a

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<sup>37</sup> - د. يوسف كريم, "الهجرة والأمن الأوروبي الجديد في المتوسط", مركز المتوسط للدراسات الاستراتيجية, تاريخ النشر 16 مايو 2024, متاح على الرابط التالي: [https://mediterraneancss.uk/2024/05/16/migration-security-the-mediterranean/#\\_edn23](https://mediterraneancss.uk/2024/05/16/migration-security-the-mediterranean/#_edn23)



list of rights and responsibilities for authorities tasked with monitoring, particularly those responsible for border control<sup>38</sup>.

Following the signing of the Schengen Agreement, Europe's migration policy began to emphasize the importance of a unified approach to transforming Europe into a fortress that is difficult to penetrate. To reinforce this strategy, Europe signed another agreement within the EU framework, further strengthening the provisions and principles of Schengen.

This subsequent agreement, signed in **February 1992**, is known as the **Maastricht Treaty**. For the first time, it established a common policy and a system of intergovernmental cooperation. Additionally, the **Amsterdam Treaty**, signed in **October 1997**, focused on laying the foundations for a competitive and unified policy in the fields of migration and asylum. These treaties collectively provided the EU with a framework to manage migration and asylum with greater consistency and collaboration<sup>39</sup>.

It is worth noting that European countries' migration policies have not been limited to the aforementioned agreements. Each country has enacted national legislation to achieve two primary objectives:

1. **Reducing irregular migration flows**
2. **Deterring irregular migration in all its forms**

An analysis of the content of these new or amended laws related to combating and preventing migration reveals notable trends. These laws differ from one country to another in terms of the severity of penalties imposed on those involved in smuggling operations or the conditions and criteria for granting visas. However, they share a common goal: tightening legislation, prioritizing security concerns and national interests over humanitarian

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<sup>38</sup> **EU**, Schengen Agreement and Convention, Available at : [https://search.app?link=https%3A%2F%2Feur-lex.europa.eu%2FEN%2Flegal-content%2Fglossary%2Fschengen-agreement-and-convention.html&utm\\_campaign=aga&utm\\_source=agsadl2%2Csh%2Fx%2Fgs%2Fm2%2F4](https://search.app?link=https%3A%2F%2Feur-lex.europa.eu%2FEN%2Flegal-content%2Fglossary%2Fschengen-agreement-and-convention.html&utm_campaign=aga&utm_source=agsadl2%2Csh%2Fx%2Fgs%2Fm2%2F4)

<sup>39</sup> **European Parliament**, Fact Sheets on the European Union, 2024, Available at : [https://search.app?link=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.europarl.europa.eu%2Ffactsheets%2Fen%2Fsheet%2F3%2Fthe-maastricht-and-amsterdam-treaties&utm\\_campaign=aga&utm\\_source=agsadl2%2Csh%2Fx%2Fgs%2Fm2%2F4](https://search.app?link=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.europarl.europa.eu%2Ffactsheets%2Fen%2Fsheet%2F3%2Fthe-maastricht-and-amsterdam-treaties&utm_campaign=aga&utm_source=agsadl2%2Csh%2Fx%2Fgs%2Fm2%2F4)

solutions, halting the flow of foreign migrants, and regulating the duration of their stay, with a focus on cracking down on irregular migrants.

The fact that most EU countries, particularly those in Southern Europe (e.g., **Italy** and **Spain**), have repeatedly amended their migration laws underscores that these issues have become fertile ground for political competition<sup>40</sup>.

Despite the variety of these laws, they have failed to achieve their primary goal of controlling irregular migration. This failure, in our assessment, stems from a focus on addressing the outcomes rather than tackling the root causes. Perhaps the greatest shortcoming of these legislative policies lies in their **humanitarian impact**. The laws and measures targeting migrants from the southern Mediterranean have adversely affected the rights of migrants enshrined in international charters and declarations.

### **3) Addressing the Demographic Crisis in Light of European Policies and the Rise of the Far Right:**

Despite the decline in the number of irregular refugees since **2015**, the issue of migration remains a contentious topic in Europe. According to far-right parties, such as Italy's **League** party and France's **National Rally**, the European Union cannot open its borders to migrants. They argue that job opportunities and welfare should be reserved for native citizens.

Economists, on the other hand, view migration differently. From an economic perspective, migration is essential for helping resolve the demographic crisis faced by European countries. This raises the question: **Does the EU need migrants to address this issue?** The answer is that while the positive role of migrants should not be overestimated, there are very few viable alternatives.

Based on the estimates outlined in this study, it is evident that **Germany** and the **EU** require more migrants, but existing measures and policies do not accommodate this need.

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<sup>40</sup> - د. يوسف كريم , مرجع سابق

- In **2015**, German Chancellor **Angela Merkel** opened the door to approximately **one million refugees**. However, this decision sparked domestic backlash, contributing to the rise of the far-right **Alternative for Germany (AfD)** as a significant electoral force.
- In response, Merkel agreed to impose an annual cap of **200,000 refugees**, reducing the number of registered asylum seekers from around **890,000 in 2015** to approximately **162,000 in 2018**, according to Germany's Ministry of the Interior.

It is important to note that asylum seekers represent only one type of migration. Many people migrate for economic reasons.

- In **2017**, Germany's **net migration** was slightly over **400,000**. While this figure is high by historical standards, it is significantly lower than the surge seen in **2015**, which amounted to **1.14 million**<sup>41</sup>..

Given the political backlash to Merkel's 2015 initiative, it is difficult to imagine Germany accepting a higher number of migrants than it currently does. This underscores the tension between the demographic need for migrants and the political and social resistance fueled by the rise of far-right parties.

The far-right has embraced the term "**The Great Replacement**," coined by writer **Renaud Camus** in his 2010 book *"The Abbreviations of Innocence."* The concept elaborates on what Camus sees as a systematic process of replacing the native population of European lands with new inhabitants.

It is worth noting that far-right ideologies are often steeped in conspiracy theories. Advocates of this view argue that European authorities are excessively lenient in confronting the demographic replacement of the continent's population. They believe this process allows migrants from the **Middle East** and **North Africa** to replace Europe's native inhabitants, leading to the disintegration of traditional Christian societies and their replacement with predominantly **African Muslim communities**.

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<sup>41</sup> - فرديناندو جوليانو, "أوروبا.. المهاجرون والمشكلة الديموغرافية", مركز الاتحاد للأخبار, تاريخ النشر: 7 يوليو 2019م, متاح علي الرابط التالي:  
<https://www.aletihad.ae/wejhatarticle/102854/>

This far-right movement adopts slogans about defending "the people," "the nation," and "its identity." It also emphasizes the importance of upholding public laws, individual freedoms, and equality before the law within European societies. These values are presented as being at risk of erosion if religious laws specific to certain groups are implemented—primarily referring to **Islamic law (Sharia)**.

While Islamic activists advocating for the application of Sharia law in Europe are rare, the far-right highlights concerns about its potential influence, particularly regarding **personal status laws**. These fears have become central to their rhetoric, despite limited evidence of any widespread calls for Sharia law in European societies<sup>42</sup>.

#### **Fourth: Case Studies of Successful Social and Economic Integration of Migrants**

**Model 1: Portugal** In **2018**, approximately **20 migrants** out of a total of **630**, rescued from the Mediterranean by the ship *Aquarius*, were relocated to **Portugal**, specifically to the town of **Fundão**, which successfully integrated them into the community and labor market. A year after their arrival, their lives had significantly improved.

The town authorities converted a former Catholic school into a **refugee reception center**, housing around **30 refugees**, most of whom were from **Sudan** and **Eritrea**—countries plagued by civil wars, poverty, and hunger, forcing their people to seek new lives in Europe.

Portugal has recently shown considerable interest in welcoming migrants rejected by Italy and other countries, as part of its effort to address its demographic crisis and labor shortages, while bolstering its reputation as a humanitarian nation.

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42 - عمر الأسعد, "أوروبا والهجرة.. هل الاستبدال السكاني كبير أم صغير", موقع DARAJ, تاريخ النشر: 25 أبريل 2023م, متاح علي الرابط التالي: <https://daraj.media>

10- مهاجر نيوز, "نجلح بلدة برتغالية صغيرة في إدماج المهاجرين.. نموذج يحتذي به", تاريخ النشر: مايو 2019م, متاح علي الرابط التالي: <https://www.infomigrants.net/a/>

Currently, nearly **half of the refugees and migrants** in Portugal work in sectors such as **agriculture, restaurants, clothing manufacturing, or construction**. The majority of those not employed are either still participating in **training and integration programs** or have left the country, often to reunite with family members in other nations.

**Model 2: Germany** Integration policies in **Germany** receive significant attention due to the historical influx of refugees and migrants between **2015 and 2029**. The German government has implemented various measures to enhance migrant integration, including:

- Language courses
- Integration programs
- Initiatives to strengthen social cohesion through community activities and reducing discrimination and racism.

These efforts aim to create a more inclusive society, facilitating the smooth integration of migrants and refugees into German culture, while addressing societal challenges and fostering unity<sup>43</sup>.

## **Key Integration Policies and Programs in Germany:**

**A. Integration Councils in Germany:** Integration councils in Germany represent migrants at the municipal level. Migrants elect the councils every five years. In this context, any adult (German or foreign) who has been residing in Germany for at least one year has the right to run for the integration council in the municipality of their primary residence, provided they have been registered there for at least three months. Nominations can be individual, on independent lists, or as part of political party lists<sup>44</sup>.

Integration councils participate in shaping municipal strategies related to migrants, covering areas such as education, health, and social affairs. The focus of integration councils is on the interests of migrants and supporting social cohesion in Germany by addressing migrant issues, combating racism and discrimination. They also contribute to drafting laws aimed at better societal integration of migrants and provide advice and suggestions for managing these municipal councils.

**B. National Integration Action Plan:** In **2021**, German Chancellor **Angela Merkel** announced a National Integration Action Plan in collaboration with state leaders and civil society. The plan aims to expand efforts to combat

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<sup>43</sup> - المركز الأوروبي لدراسات مكافحة الإرهاب والاستخبارات, "هل نجحت سياسات الاندماج في أوروبا.. السياسات والمخاطر, تاريخ النشر : 17 يوليو 2021, متاح علي الرابط التالي : <https://www.europarabct.com>

<sup>44</sup> **EUROPEN COMMISSION**, COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGI, Brussels, 24.11.2020, Available at: [https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/system/files\\_en?file](https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/system/files_en?file)

discrimination and racism by establishing advisory centers dedicated to assisting individuals who have experienced racism and hate speech. The German government approved parts of the plan focusing on facilitating access to the labor market.

**C. Community Care Program for Refugees:** This program involves members of civil society taking responsibility for the care and resettlement of refugees in Germany. Refugees are assisted in their integration process through<sup>45</sup>:

- Covering their rent expenses for **two years**.
- Providing advice and guidance in various areas, including daily life and administrative matters, to help them navigate their new environment.

**Model 3: France** France places significant importance on the integration of migrants, particularly given the increasing number of arrivals from conflict and war zones. This is evident in the initiatives undertaken by French authorities, including special programs for training and preparing refugees, providing housing and healthcare, and implementing related procedures

### Integration Policy in France

**1) Integration Legislation in France** French authorities enacted a law on August 10, 2019, requiring Syrian refugees to participate in a four-day program for integration into society. The program focuses on teaching the French language more effectively both spoken and written. In addition, participants are provided with information about the stages of the establishment of the European Union, French laws, historical and geographical details about France, guidance on how to register children in schools, and information related to taxes, administrative paperwork, and procedures necessary for Syrians<sup>46</sup>.

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<sup>45</sup> - المركز الأوروبي لدراسات مكافحة الإرهاب والاستخبارات, مرجع سابق

<sup>46</sup> المركز الأوروبي لدراسات مكافحة الإرهاب والاستخبارات , "الاندماج في فرنسا .. السياسات والمعوقات", تاريخ النشر يوليو 2022, متاح علي الرابط التالي:

<https://www.europarabct.com/>

**2) Special Vocational Training Program** Launched in 2019, this program targets **1,500 refugees**, addressing the challenges of professional integration in France, particularly amid declining demand for unskilled labor.

**3) Establishment of a Model Reception Center** The center aims to assist refugees in integrating into France by providing shelter for homeless refugees or those living in informal camps.

**Model 4: Britain** The UK has adopted policies and programs aimed primarily at integrating migrants and Muslim refugees in Britain, as outlined below:

**1) Social Activity Program** Most mosques in Britain regularly contribute to food banks and engage in volunteer work, such as fundraising for Miracle House and hospitals. Examples include raising money to purchase defibrillators and conducting environmental cleaning initiatives, all aimed at benefiting the broader community<sup>47</sup>.

**2) Support Policy Across All Integration Stages** Successful integration of migrants relies on early action and long-term investment. It is essential to provide support to migrants, and authorities should expand pre-integration measures such as training and orientation courses. This support is crucial in contexts like resettlement and community care<sup>48</sup>.

**3) Integration for All Program** This program ensures that all policies are accessible to everyone, including migrants and EU citizens with migrant backgrounds. It involves adapting key policies to meet the needs of a diverse community, considering the specific challenges and requirements of various groups. Measures aimed at helping migrants integrate should not come at the expense of initiatives that benefit other vulnerable or disadvantaged groups. Instead, they should contribute to making policies more inclusive<sup>49</sup>.

## **Conclusion:**

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<sup>47</sup> **THE BRITISH MUSLIM HERITAGE CENTER**, ENGAGING BRITISH MUSLIMS WITH THE 2021 CENSUS, available at: <https://bmhc.org.uk/engaging-british-muslims-with-the-2021-census/>

<sup>48</sup> **The Migration Observatory**, Asylum and refugee resettlement in the UK, 2024, available at <https://migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/resources/briefings/migration-to-the-uk-asylum>

<sup>49</sup> **Shared BritishFuture**: Muslims and Integration in UK, available at <https://bit.ly/3B2QpPN>



In conclusion, Europe remains one of the world's most prominent regions for receiving refugees, and the large-scale reception of refugees in recent years has contributed to the rise of far-right rhetoric in several European countries such as France, Germany, Italy, and others. The far-right argues that countries bear burdens they should not have to, claiming that the presence of refugees impacts the cultural identity of the state, which has led the European Union and several individual states to provide assistance to North African countries to enhance their capacity to contain refugees and prevent their passage to Europe. Thus, the refugee challenge is a highly complex issue within the European political and economic framework, requiring greater attention in the coming years.

Amid the escalating demographic challenges faced by Europe, irregular migration presents itself as a multifaceted dilemma that carries both risks and opportunities for sustainable development. Understanding the interplay between these challenges and leveraging migration as a strategic tool can shift the current discourse from a focus on security to one that emphasizes inclusivity and development.

It is clear that addressing irregular migration necessitates adopting integrated approaches that encompass legislative, economic, and social dimensions, ensuring a balance between protecting national security and promoting human rights. Successful experiences in some European countries highlight the importance of investing in integration and employment policies as key drivers for transforming these challenges into opportunities that enhance the sustainability of European societies.

Integrating migrants and refugees into host societies brings numerous benefits for all parties involved, and countries that have opened their doors to migrants and refugees have recognized this, working to harness these human resources for developmental purposes.

Finally, several recommendations can be proposed to transform these challenges into sustainable opportunities, including individual-level recommendations focused on supporting individual migrants and policy-level recommendations involving the establishment of laws and measures that

align with international law and promote the integration of migrants into European societies.

## **Recommendations for Transforming Challenges into Sustainable Opportunities**

### **Firstly: Recommendations at the Individual Level**

- **Guaranteeing economic, social, and cultural rights for migrants:** Addressing issues related to economic, social, and cultural rights is of utmost importance, particularly for migrants who often face severe discrimination in housing, healthcare, employment, or social security. This can be achieved by ensuring that the fundamental rights recognized in international human rights agreements are upheld by relevant state authorities.
- **Providing legal status for migrants:** Migrants without legal status are often victims of marginalization, exploitation, and discrimination, which denies them their basic human rights and freedoms. Host countries should collaborate to ensure access to justice for undocumented migrants for humanitarian reasons.
- **Regularizing the status of undocumented migrants in Europe:** This applies to migrants from unstable countries suffering from wars, conflicts, or poverty. Political entities in host countries should be encouraged to protect these individuals.
- **Ensuring effective communication with migrants:** Relevant authorities should provide appropriate methods and means for communication to understand migrants' needs. This involves removing language and cultural barriers, establishing a 24-hour hotline with trained personnel, and disseminating accurate information.
- **Launching equitable initiatives related to migrants' personal status:** These initiatives aim to regularize their legal situation and meet their basic needs for housing and healthcare. The acceptance of migrants by host communities greatly aids their integration into society.
- **Promoting integration of migrants with local populations:** This can be achieved by organizing joint activities and events and fostering cultural diversity within the community.

- Providing suitable employment and education opportunities for migrants: Investment in vocational training and continuous education is crucial.
- Encouraging collaboration between governments and the private sector: This collaboration can create job opportunities for migrants, especially in sectors experiencing labor shortages.
- Developing entrepreneurship support programs for migrants: These programs would assist migrants who wish to establish their own businesses.
- Enhancing communication and understanding between migrants and host communities: Educational and cultural programs can bridge gaps and foster mutual respect and understanding.
- Providing counseling services and psychological support for migrants to help them adapt to their new lives and achieve their full potential.
- Offering special educational and training programs for migrants to enhance their skills, increase employment opportunities, and promote their integration into society.
- Providing assistance to unaccompanied children by allocating suitable accommodations for them in migrant camps and centers, as well as ensuring access to essential services such as healthcare and education.

### **Secondly: Recommendations at the Institutional and Legal Level**

- There should be alignment between national laws and international standards, ensuring compatibility between national laws and international human rights agreements such as the Geneva Convention.
- Establish measures to combat discrimination and racism by enacting strict laws to counter all forms of racism against migrants.
- Update national and international migration and asylum laws periodically to address the challenges they face, by modernizing legal systems to facilitate and expedite asylum applications and determine the legal status of migrants.

- Attempt to resolve political pressures that may confront the previous recommendations by achieving consensus among European countries on migration policies.
- Enact legislation that guarantees migrants' access to their basic needs, such as the right to education, healthcare, and work. Addressing this complex issue requires working in two parallel directions:
  - The first involves the European Union's policies to mitigate the problem in light of its extensive experience in addressing it over past decades.
  - The second involves not overlooking the source and transit countries by monitoring their economic and political conditions and attempting to support comprehensive reforms in these areas in a well-studied manner, with the primary aim of providing a suitable environment for humane living in these developing countries, in order to reduce the risks associated with irregular migration and minimize human and material losses for all. These measures, among others, may help reduce migration from southern Mediterranean countries to northern ones.
- Positive communication about migrants: During times of crisis, migrants face increasing levels of hatred and discrimination in host countries. Positive communication encourages tolerance, non-discrimination, and inclusivity. Communication can be achieved by establishing a 24-hour hotline with competent staff to respond to calls and provide information.
- Bridging communication gaps between migrants and states: This can be achieved by disseminating information to isolated migrants and organizing visits by international organizations to detention centers.
- Exemptions in residency or departure requirements: Migrants face barriers in obtaining exit or migration visas. These exemptions include waiving fees for departure or overstaying, easing re-entry permits for affected migrants such as workers, students, and foreigners, and providing travel documents for stateless individuals to facilitate their travel. Some countries are obliged under international law to issue identity documents and travel cards for stateless persons.

- Assessing migrants' needs: Relevant authorities can conduct minimal targeted community assessments to evaluate specific needs, identify community demographic characteristics, and locate migrants.
- Providing support centers for migrants in host countries: These centers can offer cash and non-cash services such as food, water, blankets, and healthcare. They can also screen and refer cases requiring special protection, such as victims of wars and trafficking.
- Adopting balanced and comprehensive migration policies: These policies should aim to promote the social and economic integration of migrants into host communities and enhance cooperation among European countries to implement unified migration policies and ensure equitable distribution of migrants among member states.
- Combating discrimination and racism against migrants: Raise public awareness and enforce stricter penalties for discriminatory practices, while fostering cultural coexistence and understanding between local communities and migrants through joint cultural events and programs.
- Enhancing collaboration with non-governmental and international organizations: Strengthen efforts to provide essential support to migrants and achieve sustainable development for them.
- Supporting economic development in rural and underprivileged areas: Create job opportunities for both migrants and local residents in these regions.
- Encouraging investment in entrepreneurship projects: These projects can create job opportunities for migrants and contribute to local economic development. Additionally, explore the use of modern technology and innovations to improve the flow of migrants and guide them toward sustainable job opportunities.
- Promoting international cooperation and knowledge exchange with other countries: This includes sharing best practices and experiences in handling migration and integration issues, as well as analyzing mechanisms for international collaboration to exchange expertise and knowledge in managing migrant flows and addressing challenges.

- Strengthening partnerships among governments, the private sector, and NGOs: These partnerships aim to address shared challenges facing migrants and transform them into sustainable opportunities.
- Studying the economic and social impact of migrant flows on European countries: Analyze the main challenges resulting from these flows and assess current migration and asylum policies in European countries, identifying their strengths and weaknesses.
- Examining and analyzing international best practices in managing migrant flows: This involves assessing the impact of migrants on the labor market and the local economy and providing scenarios to improve employment and enhance the professional integration of migrants.
- Evaluating the role of local communities and NGOs in supporting migrant integration: Provide educational and training opportunities for migrants and analyze the effects of cultural coexistence between local communities and migrants to foster cultural understanding and societal integration.
- Enhancing international cooperation between host and source countries: Develop joint strategies to combat irregular migration and ensure the exchange of information and resources on this issue.
- Improving living conditions in origin countries: Achieve this by investing in developmental projects and providing decent job opportunities for individuals.
- Developing awareness programs in source countries: Educate individuals about the risks of irregular migration and the benefits of legal migration.
- Enhancing border management: Use modern technology to develop humane border monitoring processes while ensuring collaboration with human rights organizations and humanitarian relief agencies to safeguard migrants' rights during investigative processes.

### **Thirdly: Innovative Recommendations for Transforming Challenges into Opportunities**

- Launching the "European Demographic Bridge Initiative": Establish training centers in source countries to prepare migrants before they arrive in Europe, ensuring they meet the demands of the labor market.
- "Innovative Integration Through Small Projects" Program: Empower migrants to start small businesses by providing training and financial support.

- **Dual Educational Strategy:** Enhance education as a tool for social integration by: Offering scholarships and cultural exchange programs for migrant youth. Incorporating concepts of cultural diversity and tolerance into school curricula.
- **"Smart Migration Data Platforms":** Leverage technology to improve the management of migration flows and address societal needs. This includes: Developing AI-based tools for continuous migration data analysis. Using these analyses to design effective and comprehensive long-term policies.
- **"Migrant-Friendly Cities":** Establish support centers that facilitate accommodation and employment while organizing local support networks to connect migrants with communities.
- **"Social Innovation Fund for Migration":** Finance projects that promote coexistence and integration.
- **Migrant Talent Bank:** Create a centralized database of migrant skills to connect them with available opportunities. This includes: Developing a comprehensive system to identify skills and professions in demand within the European market. Collaborating with companies to ensure migrants are employed in roles that match market needs.
- **"Rapid Training Program for Critical Professions":** Address shortages in vital sectors like healthcare and agriculture through intensive training programs.
- **"Integrated Humanitarian Corridors":** Establish registration points for migrants in transit countries, in coordination with international organizations, to facilitate resettlement.



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