

EUROPE'S REFUGEE AND MIGRANT CRISIS: CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS (*CRIZA REFUGIAȚILOR ȘI MIGRANȚILOR ÎN EUROPA: PROVOCĂRI ȘI PERSPECTIVE*)

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Rezumat. Criza europeană a migranților, cunoscută și sub denumirea de criză de refugiați, care a izbucnit în Europa în anul 2015, rămâne a fi una dintre cele mai acute probleme cu care se confruntă Uniunea Europeană în prezent. Prin acest studiu ne-am propus să realizăm o analiză asupra crizei date, pentru a pune în evidență care sunt provocările și perspective care le creează, și ce impact va avea asupra comunității europene. Metodele științifice folosite sunt studiile de caz și metoda studiului longitudinal, datorită cărora am reușit să obținem unele rezultate cu referire referitor la evoluția crizei de la izbucnirea acesteia și să identificăm care au fost principalele probleme create de aceasta la nivel european.

Cuvinte-cheie: Migranți, refugiați, azil, Uniunea Europeană.

JEL CLASSIFICATION: F22, J23, J62

Europe's Refugee and Migrant crisis that started in 2015 has created many challenges for the European Union, and most of them seemed to be unsolved until nowadays. More than a million migrants and refugees from Middle East and North Africa crossed into Europe in 2015, with the hope of finding a new home or asylum and this number is still in increase, even after several trials of diminishing it.

The **objectives** of this study are:

- to identify the profile of the refugees;
- to identify the most affected countries in the European Union;
- to determine the challenges and the prospects that Europe is facing because of the crisis;
- to analyze the impact of the crisis on EU.

The study was based on several **hypotheses**: a) EU cooperation with Turkey on refugees could lead to the solution of this problem; b) the crisis of migrants and refugees to the EU would have caused BREXIT; c) the majority of the refugees come from countries with serious problems of democracy, crushed by wars and conflicts of different purposes; d) refugees create big problems, but also some opportunities for the EU.

The **methods** used in this study were analytical, deduction and induction, comparative method, statistics and others.

Migrant's profile. The conflict in Syria, was one of the main causes that determined the people to migrate to a safer place, also the ongoing violence in Afghanistan and Iraq, abuses in Eritrea are also leading people to look for new lives elsewhere. So, the most of the refugees come from countries with serious problems of democracy, crushed by wars and conflicts of different kinds: Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, Eritrea, Nigeria and others countries. The most common way used for arriving in the EU is by the Mediterranean Sea, so as in the past months in Greece nearly 7.3 thousands immigrants reached Greece by sea, whereas 1.4thousands by land.

The profile of migrant's in Europe (2019):

- Female - 51,4%, male - 48,6%;
- Medium age of migrants: 42,7 years old;
- Migrants below 20: 8,8% of the total number;
- Working age: 76,8% of the total number;

- Aged 65 and more: 14,4% of the total number [1,2].

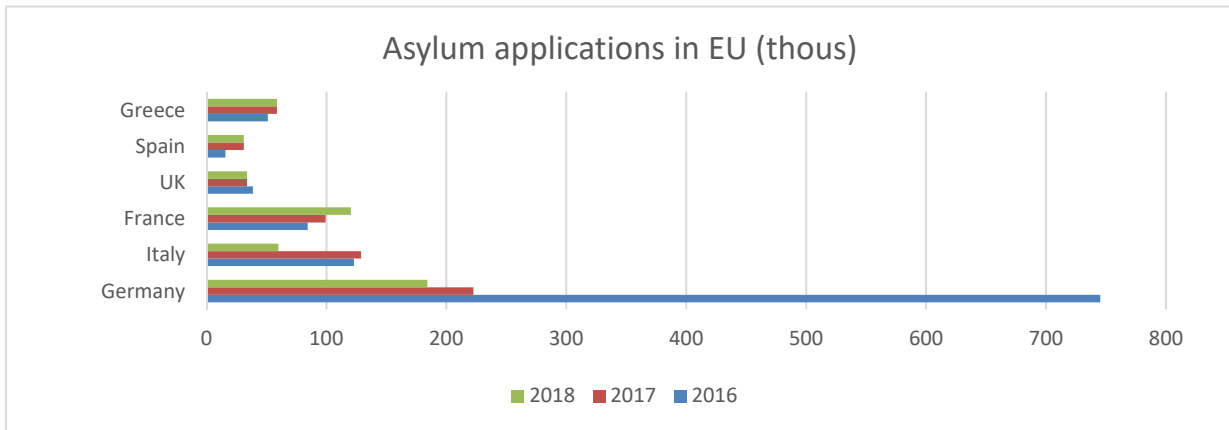


Fig. 1 Asylum applications in European Union. 2016-2018

Source: Created by the authors using data from euoparl.europa.eu

According to the statistical data analyzed, the most affected countries are Germany, Italy, France, Spain and Greece. Germany is the country that accepts most of the refugees. The main reason seems to be the hope of finding high social protection and better job opportunities. Germany has tried to facilitate the process, hoping that asylum seekers will complete the labor market, especially where there are no demands from the aging population, in the context of the low unemployment rate. Also, as the chancellor of Germany, Angela Merkel, has declared, by accepting this big number of migrants, they could change the approach of people to their black history background [2,3].

Regarding the main opportunities for EU member states in accepting refugees, if well integrated, refugees can contribute to greater flexibility in the labor market, help address demographic challenges, and improve fiscal sustainability. Nevertheless, for Member States with ageing populations and shrinking workforces, migration could alter the age distribution in a way that may strengthen sustainability. Migrants can improve the labor markets' adjustment capacity to regional differences or regional shocks by taking on jobs in sectors where natives may be unwilling to work and by being more responsive than natives to regional differences in economy [4].

In particular, lowering barriers to facilitate the 'employability' of migrants is essential for their ability to get a regular job and to have a positive impact on growth and public finances in the medium term. The German Institute for Economic Research (Deutsches Institut für Wirtschaftsforschung, or DIW) released research finding EU immigration had boosted Germany's GDP growth by an average of 0.2% every year between 2011 and 2016. As for Italy, in recent years non-EU-citizens contributed around €16.5 billion (\$19 billion) to the Italian economy, compared to the €12.6 billion (\$14.5 billion) they received. [5]

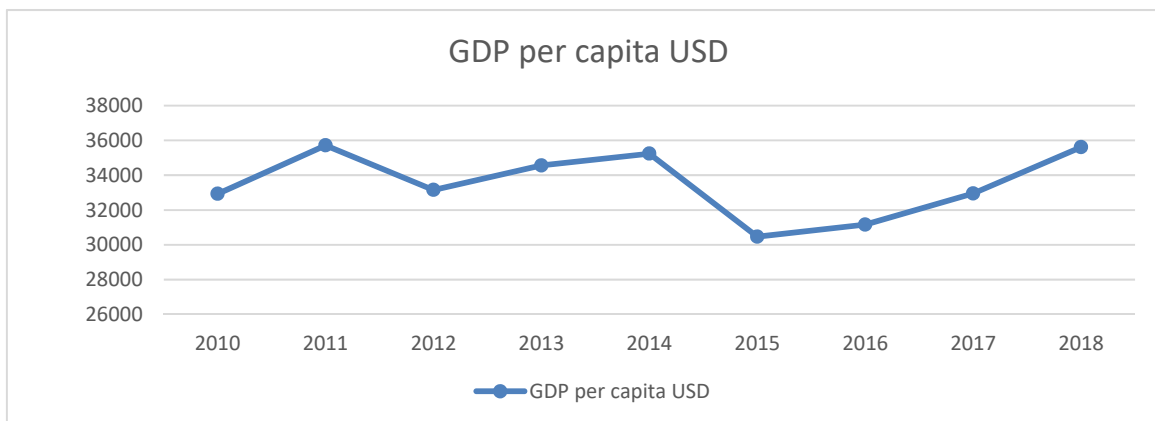


Fig.2. European Union GDP per capita in the period 2010-2018

Source: elaborated by the authors using data from World Bank

(<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.PP.CD?locations=EU>)

Analyzing the graph from Fig.2. we can see that during refugee crisis in 2015, the value of GDP per capita has sharply decreased from 35239.098 USD to 30469.89 USD. For the next years the value of GDP has constantly increased and in 2018 the EU GDP per capita showed a similar value as GDP per capita before refugee crisis (35616.087 USD). This demonstrates that, as the result of a good integration policy and refugee management, EU succeed in overcoming economic crisis caused by the high flow of immigrants. Finally, refugees were enrolled in economic processes and have been boosting EU GDP per capita till now.

Concerning the main challenges of accepting immigrants for host countries, we can identify the main negative consequences as [6]:

- Low-skilled refugees and immigrants put downward pressure on wages. The argument is that an increase in the supply of unskilled labour enables firms to fill vacancies with lower wages than previously. A recent [study by the Bank of England](#) found a rise in immigration had a small impact on overall wages – with a 10% increase in immigration – wages fall by 0.31%.
- Immigration could lead to some displacement of native-born workers who then experience structural unemployment. For example, if migrants gain unskilled labor because they are willing to work for lower wages.
- If migrants move to areas with limited housing stock, migration can put upward pressure on rents and house prices, reducing living standards and increasing housing poverty for both migrants and native-born population who experience high living costs. Studies such as the Migration Advisory Committee (2018) found that a 1% increase in the UK's population due to migration increased house prices by 1%.

It is worth mentioning that EU refugee crisis from 2015 was one of the reasons for starting BREXIT procedure. The UK has opted out of any plans for a quota system but, according to Home Office figures, 1,000 Syrian refugees were resettled under the Vulnerable Persons Relocation scheme in 2015. Prime Minister David Cameron said the UK had to accept up to 20,000 refugees from Syria till 2020. Immigration issue was the driven factor for UK citizens to vote for leaving European Union.

EU refugee crisis has also influenced upon Moldova's relations with EU. Starting with the creation of the Eastern Partnership policy, up until the Riga Summit, as well as the review of the EU's Neighborhood Policy have revealed very clearly a shift in the official position of Brussels. Due to scarcity of resources and a hard reality of addressing needs of hundreds of thousands of refugees, the EU neither wants nor is able to actively push its eastern neighbors towards more dynamic and consistent democratic reforms, which might make those states closer to the EU standards in the period of refugee crisis. Currently, after readdressing the issue of asylum seekers, EU is actively implied in progressing and adopting Eastern Partnership projects [7].

During EU refugee crisis EU member states set several legal frameworks for readdressing high flows of asylum seekers, especially in southern countries. One of these frameworks is EU-Turkey statement where, EU Heads of State or Government and Turkey agreed to end irregular migration flows from Turkey to the EU, ensure improved reception conditions for refugees in Turkey and open up organized, safe and legal channels to Europe for Syrian refugees. The EU has supported Turkey in its efforts to host refugee with 3 billion Euro. Moreover, over €1,3 billion in EU funding has been allocated to Greece to support migration management since the start of 2015, being also a very affected country [8].

CONCLUSIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS:

Analyzing the overall picture of Europe's refugee and migrant crisis, we can say that problem will remain a critical one for a long period, as the political and economic situation is still bad in the Middle East and North Africa. The most refugees remain to be at working age with a low level of education. They continue to choose Northern European countries to claim for asylum and protection. Still, their work is underappreciated financially. Average salary for refugees is lower than average salary of local population, due to the lack of skills and knowledge. As the core point is Turkey-Greece borders, EU should offer more financial support to these countries, while trying to close the illegal and dangerous Aegean migration route.

EU has to revise its asylum policy, and to agree on one set off rules to be applied across the borders with a more tight control. Moreover, as the whole European Union is affected by this crisis, being united, all the member countries should take responsibilities in solving the problem, so mandatory quota scheme that would distribute the refugees and migrants over all 27 countries, should be applied.

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