

*Arkadiusz MALKOWSKI*

## **PROTECTION OF THE EU'S EXTERNAL BORDERS AND THE MIGRATION CRISIS IN EUROPE**

## **OCHRONA GRANIC ZEWNĘTRZNYCH UNII EUROPEJSKIEJ A KRYZYS MIGRACYJNY W EUROPIE**

Department of Marketing, West Pomeranian University of Technology, Szczecin  
Żołnierska 47, 71-210 Szczecin, Poland, e-mail: amalkowski@zut.edu.pl

**Summary.** The EU's external borders are 42 472 km long, with 8826 km of land borders. The Schengen Area comprises 25 countries, which enables almost half a billion people to move freely within its boundaries. For this reason, a proper and effective protection of external borders is necessary to ensure safety for both the EU as a whole, as well as for its individual member countries. The aim of this article is to present the complex issue which is the migration crisis in Europe. The research hypothesis has been formulated as follows: The EU has lost the real possibility of protecting its borders. The study uses the available subject literature and the secondary data collected by Eurostat and Frontex.

**Key words:** Frontex, migration crisis, immigrants, border protection.

**Słowa kluczowe:** Frontex, kryzys migracyjny, imigracja, ochrona granic.

### **INTRODUCTION**

At the turn of 2013 and 2014, the Italian island of Lampedusa became a symbol of the growing migration problem in Europe. Thousands of fugitives and refugees from Africa became the subject of a heated debate on the shape of the community asylum policy, and the efficiency of the EU's external borders protection system (Burmistrz Lampedusy apeluje o pomoc UE... 2015). In the recent months, the attention of the European public opinion is directed at the Balkan region, especially the Greek-Macedonian, Hungarian, and Croatian borders. As it turns out, refugees choose this route increasingly frequently while traversing the countries of former Yugoslavia towards Germany, United Kingdom, or the Scandinavian countries.

Within a few weeks, we found that perceiving the EU as "Fortress Europe" is merely a slogan, unsupported by any actual force capable of protecting the European borders. Thousands of immigrants cross the external border of the European Union and enter the EU territory unmonitored. This situation has led to a change in the perception of borders and their role in the united Europe.

The aim of this article is to present the complex issue of migration crisis in Europe. The research hypothesis has been formulated as follows: The EU has lost the real possibility of protecting its borders. The study draws from academic literature on the subject and secondary data collected by Eurostat and Frontex. The empirical part consists of results of surveys conducted by the author on a group of randomly selected 246 people. The respondents were students of two West Pomeranian universities.

## **MIGRATION AS A RESEARCH PROBLEM**

In the literature on the topic of migration, the phenomenon is predominantly perceived in a negative light (Górny and Kaczmarczyk 2003). The political and social discourse presents the problem of migration through the lens of conflict and failure of appropriate institutions to react to crisis situations. This is undoubtedly connected with the information delivered through the media, which allows us to witness, via live footage, immigrants illegally crossing EU's external borders; borders which for millions of EU citizens have been synonymous with safety, security, and territorial integrity.

A more thorough look at the issue of migration reveals that the phenomenon has always existed. According to the theoretical approach of classical economics, it is the imperfections of market mechanisms that are the source of migration. Already in 1932, John Hicks formulated a hypothesis about the mobility of labor being connected with the differentiation of wage rates (Górny and Kaczmarczyk 2003). The proponents of world-systems theory point to the historical determinants of migration processes, resulting from the shaping of a global socio-economic system (Bijak et al. 2004). For centuries, migrations were one of the ways of solving social, religious, or economic problems. Today, more and more often in the countries affected by immigration an argument is raised about the majority of immigrants being economic immigrants and not political refugees.

The resulting complexity of the migration issue makes it difficult to arrive at a single, unambiguous definition of this phenomenon. Changes brought about by the globalization process caused numerous nation-states to lose many functions which had hitherto been reserved for them, in the name of not quite precisely defined integration processes. As a result, it is difficult to select a range of means and actions which could be used by the governments with the aim of regulating the phenomenon and actively counteracting the uncontrolled and illegal influx of immigrants.

The most commonly mentioned factors which influence the increase in migration are: disintegration of multinational states and the ethnic and religious conflicts directly related to this disintegration; natural catastrophes which prompt people to move into safer regions; discriminatory government policies; lack of political stability (including civil wars and armed conflicts in various parts of the world); poverty; lack of social welfare programs; uncontrolled population growth (Konarzewska 2007).

## THE ECONOMIC IMPACT OF MIGRATION

Migration is a feature of social and economic life across many countries. The economic impact of migration is no exception. Benefit or burden – what's the reality? To answer this question, it can be helpful to look at the impact of migration on two areas – the labour market and economic growth:

### Labour markets

1. Migrants accounted for 47% of the increase in the workforce in the United States and 70% in Europe over the past ten years.
2. Migrants fill important niches both in fast-growing and declining sectors of the economy.
3. Like the native-born, young migrants are better educated than those nearing retirement.
4. Migrants contribute significantly to labour-market flexibility, notably in Europe.

### Economic growth

1. Migration boosts the working-age population.
2. Migrants arrive with skills and contribute to human capital development of the receiving countries.
3. Migrants also contribute to technological progress.
4. Understanding these impacts is important if our societies are to usefully debate the role of migration<sup>1</sup>.

Angela Merkel announcement that Germany would accept Syrian refugees marked one of the ways in which Europe responded to the migrant crisis. And, along with its obvious social impact, the emergency poses real consequences for European economy, and that of other countries. The author distinguishes three main short-term effects that migrants have on the economies of their host countries:

1. Migrants lead to increases in social sector spending. Host countries must house, and sometimes educate, refugees until they become productive members of the local economy.
2. Migrants alter the local labor market. Skilled refugees compete with local workers for jobs and may end up displacing them, which may result in a temporary increase in unemployment numbers. The labor markets of host economies may become flexible, with migrant workers taking jobs that locals shun. Conversely, in the case of countries with aging populations, migration may increase the number of working-age members in an economy.
3. Refugees increase aggregate demand. New migrants represent potential markets for new services. They can revive and resuscitate host economies, leading to increases in real income and GDP for their host countries as native workers and professionals migrate to new forms and types of work. Studies show that immigration to the United States between 1990 and 2007 resulted in a 6.6% to 9.9% increase in wages per worker<sup>2</sup>.

Until recently, the migration has been considered in relation to regions located away from the EU borders. However, the events of the last months of 2014 forced many European countries to seek urgent solutions to a migration crisis unprecedented in the bloc's history.

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<sup>1</sup> Read more: Is migration good for the economy, <http://www.oecd.org/migration/OECD%20Migration%20Policy%20Debates%20Numero%202.pdf>, access: 10.10.2015.

<sup>2</sup> Read more: The economic costs of Europe's migrant crisis, <http://www.investopedia.com/articles/investing/092115/economic-costs-europes-migrant-crisis.asp#ixzz3u1ZDJ1vV>, access: 10.10.2015.

Fundamental questions asked by citizens, member state governments and the EU authorities themselves, become the key to identifying the causes and effects of illegal migration. Among these questions, the most essential are:

- How to identify irregular immigrants?
- Whether the actions undertaken on a national level can significantly influence the possibility of controlling illegal immigration?
- How to manage the immigration process and the immigrants?
- What is the situation of irregular immigrants and what is their future in the EU society?
- How to prevent illegal border crossings into the EU in the future?

The answers to these questions are not easy to find. It should be noted that it is the geopolitical conditions that become the key factor impacting both the migration and the various methods of solving the issue of illegal foreign immigration. The conflict in Syria or the lack of political and economic stability in the Mediterranean region cause thousands of people to move north. Rich European countries are their destination.

Undoubtedly, this stems from perceiving the EU borders as the so-called "Golden Curtain," separating the poverty and lack of stability of Asian and African countries from the prosperity and welfare of European democracies. The directions in which migrants are moving clearly indicate this tendency. They choose Europe's affluent nations with developed social welfare systems, such as Germany, United Kingdom, France, or the Scandinavian countries, while at the same time avoiding Eastern and Central European countries.

As the example of the United States of America shows, migrations can be a catalyst for civilizational progress for the whole nations. In the case of the US, it is conventionally assumed that it is virtually a country created by immigrants.

Among almost 500 million EU inhabitants, about 20 million are citizens of countries outside of the EU. Globally, it is estimated that every seventh person is or was a migrant. According to Lesińska, in the era of the EU common immigration policy it is virtually impossible to control migration. Migrations are not just a matter of outflow and inflow of population. Immigrants became an integral part of European societies, and at the same time a challenge for all aspects of a nation's life: the political and public sphere, the national culture, the concept of citizenship and national community, the job market, and the demographic structure (Lesińska 2008). This belief, although controversial, seems reasonable assuming that migration can be of major importance for all EU member countries in the future, particularly when considering Europe's steady decline in birth rates. Deficiency of workers in certain sectors of national economy is already perceptible and available workforce is critical for maintaining the current level of economic development in Europe. Eurostat projections estimate that by 2060 the number of people of working age in the EU will have decreased by over 50 million (Ludność w UE... 2015).

## **THE CRISIS OF THE EU BORDER PROTECTION POLICY**

Currently the EU's external borders are 42.472 km long, with 8.826 km of land borders. The Schengen Area comprises 25 countries (including some from outside the EU, for example Switzerland or Liechtenstein), which enables almost half a billion people to move

freely within its boundaries. For this reason, a proper and effective protection of external borders is necessary to ensure safety for both the EU as a whole, as well as for its individual member countries.

The growing pressure of migration, the humanitarian crisis affecting the immigrants, and the development of crime groups smuggling people across the borders were among the main premises behind the establishment of European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders (Frontex). Its main task is to coordinate actions providing the security of the EU's external borders (Święćkowska 2015). It is a complement to the Schengen system. The Agency's main tasks include (Europejska Agencja Zarządzania... 2015):

- coordinating the cooperation between member countries in the area of managing the external borders,
- monitoring research significant for the control and protection of external borders,
- assisting the member states in situations requiring additional technical and operational support on the external borders,
- introducing rapid intervention teams on the borders of member states in cases of emergencies resulting from a mass influx of illegal immigrants.

Although Frontex has been in operation for over a decade, the problem of illegal immigrants in the EU territory remains unsolved. In the author's opinion, the present immigration crisis in Europe results mostly from inconsistency in fighting illegal migration, and lack of consensus between the member states about how the situation should be dealt with. As a common market, as well as a political and cultural community, the EU is obliged to protect its external borders. The present situation along Europe's southern borders shows that the EU has lost its capability of protecting its own borders.

As demonstrated by numerous instances of immigrants illegally crossing the Hungarian border or the situation on the French-British border, nation-states cannot handle the multitude of migrants. EU citizens, observing the incapacity and helplessness of authorities and institutions in the face of multitude of people illegally crossing the territories of their countries, experience growing frustration.

At the moment of creation of the common market, European countries agreed to introduce the so-called four freedoms. Apart from the free movement of capital, goods, and services, the essence of functioning of the EU single market was to guarantee the free movement of people. Its establishment was accompanied by some fears and controversies. The difficulties connected with opening the EU labor market for Poles, Czechs, or Lithuanians showed that not all highly developed EU member states were interested in accepting all categories of immigrants.

Mass migrations from the turn of 2014 and 2015 exposed the inadequacy of systemic solutions to migration issues, and at the same time initiated a debate on the effects of illegal migrations. Nonetheless, it should be noted that according to Europol's data, since the beginning of the 21st century about 500.000 illegal immigrants enters the EU every year with the help of organized crime groups. In 2014, the Frontex agency revealed over 238.000 illegal crossings of the border, beyond official crossing points – see Table 1. Compared to 2008, the number of persons illegally crossing the borders increased by over 100.000. It concerns particularly the maritime borders. In 2014, almost 77% of all prevented attempts of crossing the borders took place at sea, while crossing the border between the crossing points.

Table 1. Illegal border crossing between the crossing points

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Total	159.881	104.599	104.060	141.051	72.437	107.365	283.532
Land border	74.149	57.440	89.800	69.879	49.183	47.192	63.338
Sea border	85.732	47.159	14.260	71.172	23.254	60.173	220.194
The percentage share of the type of border in the total number of illegal border crossings							
Land border	46.4	54.9	86.3	49.5	67.9	44	22.34
Sea border	53.6	45.1	13.7	50.5	32.1	56	77.66

Source: Frontex – Annual Risk Analysis 2012–2015, own calculations.

The data show that the security of EU borders is an illusion which has just crumbled under the weight of events taking place in the southern part of the continent. Moreover, Europol estimates that over a half of these immigrants used the help of organized crime groups while crossing the borders. Over the next months of 2015 thousands of illegal immigrants were smuggled by crime groups across the EU borders via land or sea.

Smugglers, wanting to recover the boats used to transport immigrants, use machine guns to scare off EU agencies providing help to the immigrants. Hundreds of casualties recovered from the Mediterranean Sea, along with the awareness that the routes and operating methods of smuggling immigrants onto the EU territory might be and are already used to smuggle drugs and weapons, and for human trafficking, prompted the EU to give the issue of illegal immigration the highest priority.

Unfortunately, the following months show that the EU border protection policy continues to be ineffective. No procedures have been developed and no concrete measures have been taken to change the EU's asylum and migration policy, and to restore the tightness of European borders.

According to the latest Frontex data, only in 2014 over 440.000 cases of people staying in the EU illegally were revealed. Since 2008, the Frontex services revealed over 3 million people who entered the EU illegally – see Table 2.

Table 2. Number of detected cases of illegal stay on the EU territory

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Detected cases of illegal stay on the EU territory	441.237	412.125	353.077	350.948	344.928	345.098	441.780

Source: Frontex – Annual Risk Analysis 2015, own calculations.

One of the indicators of effectiveness of measures taken to solve the issue of illegal immigration is the total number of issued expulsion decisions. In 2014, over 253,000 illegal immigrants received decisions on forceful expulsion from the EU territory. Most such decisions concerned the citizens of Syria (over 26.000), Albania (over 21.000), and Morocco (over 19.000) – see Table 3.

Table 3. Expulsion decisions

	2011	2012	2013	2014
Expulsion decisions	231.385	269.949	224.305	252.003
Expulsions	149.045	158.955	160.418	161.309
The percentage of effective expulsions [%]	64	59	71	64

Source: Frontex – Annual Risk Analysis 2015, own calculations.

At the same time, in 2014 only 161.309 people were expelled from the EU, which is less than 65% of those who had been ordered to leave. This proves that the EU and its institutions cannot cope with the issue of illegal migration. It might seem that for the EU member states and for the communities themselves, reconciling the two goals, that is humanitarian actions on the one hand, and the strengthening of external borders protection on the other, is too big of a challenge. This does not change the fact that for military, economic, and social reasons the borders of the EU must be effectively protected. Both now and in the future, the issue of illegal immigration will pose a serious challenge for the European Union.

The issue is widely discussed in the media and on the forum of European institutions. Various proposals for system of mandatory quota to share refugees and asylum seekers across EU's countries, has divided European societies. It has been unanimously agreed, however, that an uncontrolled influx of foreigners requires systemic solutions.

In the first half of 2015, the migration issue in Europe escalated. According to Frontex Agency's estimates in that particular period over 700.000 illegal immigrants stormed the EU territories (European Border Guard..., <http://Frontex.europa.eu>). For comparison purposes, in 2014 only 283.000 such cases were revealed – see Table 1. Syrians and Afghans constituted the biggest percentage among the illegal immigrants. From January to June 2015, only 79.741 people were sent to third countries.

A change is required in the perception of the functions of borders in the EU. In the author's opinion, this will also contribute to modifying the functions of the Schengen Area. It should persuade European institutions to take measures aiming at creating viable tools to protect external and internal borders. It is essential to tighten the borders against the illegal traffic of people and goods. The southern border of the EU cannot be treated as "the soft underbelly of the European Union," since it puts into question the necessity of meticulous control of the eastern or northern borders of the EU. In a special way, this situation affects Poland as a country responsible for the protection of a part of the EU's eastern border.

The quoted statistical data exemplify a migration crisis spreading all over Europe; a crisis with which neither the individual member states nor the entire European Union are capable of coping. Naturally, it raises concerns among the societies of individual countries.

The declaration that immigrants who reached Germany would be relocated in direct proximity of the Polish-German border was the pretext behind conducting a survey among students of West Pomeranian universities. According to the announcements made by the German government, over 40.000 immigrants, mostly from Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria, would be placed in centers located in the German federate states bordering the West

Pomeranian Voivodeship – Brandenburg and Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania. Some of them would be living several or several dozen kilometers from Szczecin, in Prenzlau and Schwedt.

This, of course, raises the question how their presence might influence the Polish-German relations in the borderland. It was also important to know the opinions of people inhabiting the border area on the existing border protection in the EU.

The survey showed that 83% of respondents thought the EU borders were not properly protected. As many as 93% of respondents said they were disturbed by the situation on the EU's southern borders. At the same time only 46% were afraid of having immigrants placed in direct vicinity of Szczecin. This might suggest a common belief that the issue of immigrants – mostly economic ones – will not concern the Polish side of the Polish-German borderland. It should also be noted that the region of West Pomerania exemplifies the process of integration of border regions (Malkowski 2011). The border, which separated the inhabitants of the region for decades, actually ceased to exist. An increasing number of Poles settle on the German side of the border, while the Germans visit the malls and service centers on the Polish side. Collaboration under the Pomerania Euroregion project brings tangible results, which positively affect the increasingly strong interdependencies in the border region (Malkowska 2015). The effects of these actions are to a large extent based on the change of perception of Germans by the Poles and vice versa. The cooperation allowed to dispel many stereotypes.

The balance in neighborly relations might be disrupted by locating immigrants in the cross-border zone. The fear of immigrants is not a sign of xenophobia in the communities. It is typical of people who have no idea how their nation's institutions and agencies are going to take care of immigrants and whether they might be trusted to perform their job. Taking into account the ineffectiveness of past actions, some of these fears might be justified.

According to a survey conducted by Eurobarometr, immigration is the most pressing socio-economic issue. The research done by Eurobarometr in 2015 on over 28.000 citizens from 28 EU member states shows that for 38% of respondents illegal immigration should become the priority of the EU policy. Over 78% of respondents think that immigrants should be sent into all EU member states. This opinion is shared by 57% of Poles (Parlemeter 2015... 2015).

## CONCLUSIONS

International migration has both direct and indirect effects on economic growth. Illegal immigration is the migration of people across national borders in a way that violates the immigration laws of the destination country. Some countries have millions of illegal immigrants (USA, Germany, UK). Immigration, including illegal immigration, is overwhelmingly upward, from a poorer to a richer country. However, it is also noted that illegal immigrants tend not to be the poorest within their original populations.

The key aspect in the fight against illegal immigration is international cooperation and exchange of information and experience between individual EU member states. It is crucial to jointly solve the problems of refugees and migrants who are already on the EU territory. An important component to the strategy of solving the issue of illegal immigration is creating a common visa policy and a uniform European system of granting asylum in the EU countries. It is essential to introduce effective solutions in the area of expelling those immigrants whose presence is undesirable in the EU.



The EU has to take effective measures and to encourage individual member states to make efforts with a view to solving the issue of immigrants crossing its external borders. The EU member states should have long ago developed border protection programs, and consequently, under the circumstances, should have implemented available tools and methods. It is necessary to restore the feeling of safety in the EU citizens. As surveys show, Europeans are demonstrating concern over the EU's incapacity with regard to border protection and illegal immigration.

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**Streszczenie.** Obecnie zewnętrzne granice UE liczą 42 672 km długości, w tym 8 826 km na lądzie. W skład strefy Schengen wchodzi 25 państw (w tym część spoza UE, np. Szwajcaria czy Liechtenstein), co umożliwia swobodne przemieszczanie się w jej obrębie prawie połowie miliarda osób. Z tego względu odpowiednia i skuteczna ochrona granic zewnętrznych jest niezbędna do zapewnienia bezpieczeństwa zarówno UE jako całości, jak i poszczególnym państwom członkowskim. Celem artykułu jest przedstawienie złożonej problematyki kryzysu migracyjnego w Europie. Przystępując do badań, sformułowano hipotezę badawczą: Unia europejska utraciła realną możliwość ochrony swoich granic. W opracowaniu wykorzystano dostępną literaturę przedmiotu i dane wtórne zgromadzone przez Eurostat i Frontex.

