

DESTINATION EUROPE? THE FUTURE OF GLOBAL MIGRATION

The age of migration

Migration is a formative phenomenon of our time: According to the United Nations, in 2017, around 258 million people lived in another country as international migrants. This figure also includes the approximately 29 million people who have fled conflicts or applied for asylum in other countries. However, the majority of international migrants move to work in a different country. These movements take place all over the world and reflect the social, political and economic changes within the scope of globalisation. From the perspective of the European Union, migration is of particular importance for two reasons:

- Some Member States are already dependent on immigration to help cushion the ageing of their populations, keep the economy going and continue to finance social welfare systems. This number will increase in the future and, ultimately, all EU Member States will inevitably become immigration countries. By 2030, the proportion of the working age population in the EU as a whole, i.e. people between the ages of 20 and 64, is projected to shrink by around seven percent. In absolute figures, for Germany this means a drop of five million in this age group in comparison with 2015. Even more severely affected by the ageing process will be the

populations in Italy and Portugal, countries set to reach a median age of more than 50 years by 2030. At that time, the global average will then be around 33 years. For the foreseeable future, global demographic trends will thus ensure that the demand for immigrants will increase in the richer part of the world, i.e. not only in the EU, while the migration potential from the poorer part will increase.

- The so-called refugee crisis has reinforced existing reservations and resentments towards migration, especially towards asylum seekers and refugees. Within European populations, and at a political level, these issues are now more polarised than they were ten years ago. Immigration, whether labour market-oriented or characterised by flight, is therefore questioned in general. The EU Member States hold fundamentally different positions in this difficult situation, so neither a common migration nor asylum policy is foreseeable at present. States only agree to curb irregular migration, to extend controls, and to varying degrees they rely on sealing Europe's borders.

In view of the resistance to and reservations regarding migration, the question arises: What is the future for migration in the EU? In order to moderate the public debate, it is first necessary to obtain a clear idea of current

migration and to analyse the migration potentials in different regions of the world. This study examines these elements based on various contributing factors and draws conclusions as to how migration to the EU could develop over the coming years.

How migration arises

Whether people decide to migrate depends on many factors which may influence and reinforce each other. At the heart of the decision is a fundamental desire to change one's life, the search for freedom, security or a better income. Some people migrate out of pure necessity or are fleeing from war, others because they expect a higher quality of life elsewhere. Most migrate only over short distances, often within their own country or into neighbouring states. It is only a fraction of migrants who move to another world region, such as Europe.

Key factors

1 Demographic factors

Migration is stimulated by a rapidly growing population and a large number of people of working age for whom jobs cannot be created. High population growth usually goes hand in hand with growing competition for food and drinking water, housing space, education and health services. Poor supply may give rise to social conflicts that intensify the wish to migrate. By 2030 and well beyond then, global population growth will be increasingly concentrated in sub-Saharan Africa and parts of the MENA region. For example, it is projected that Nigeria, the most populous country in Africa, will reach the population size of the current EU between 2070 and 2075.

2 Education

The better the level of education, the more likely it is that people are able to successfully build a new life elsewhere. It tends to be the better educated who decide to migrate and are able to organise this. Only indirectly, and in the longer term, does education have the effect of curbing migration: For women in particular, it is the most important factor for falling birth rates. It also improves the prospects of each individual person to make a livelihood in their own home country.

3 Economic factors

People also migrate along a prosperity gap. This is enormous between the industrialised nations and the less developed regions of the world. In addition, there is a lack of jobs there to provide the younger generation with employment. This factor encourages the wish for migration, especially among

the 20-39 age group, who make up the majority of migrants. However, the likelihood of migration across national borders only increases from a per capita gross domestic product of 2,000 US dollars per year, adjusted for purchasing power, a figure which the world's poorest countries are nowhere near reaching. Until people are able to travel further distances and also reach Europe, economic strength in the range of 3,000 to 10,000 US dollars is necessary. The politically motivated attempt to combat root causes of forced migration through development, with the aim of reducing migration, is therefore hardly likely to work. This is because development and better income opportunities will initially enable more people to organise and finance a migration.

4 Networks and diaspora

Networks between migrants and their friends and families in their countries of origin promote further migration along these channels. It is also in the interests of the countries of origin, which they therefore actively support because remittances from the diaspora represent an essential source of finance.

5 Conflicts and political factors

The number of violent conflicts worldwide has reached its highest level since 1975. These do not just include conflicts between states, but also civil wars or terror attacks. At first, people look for safe places in the surrounding regions of the country, where they can wait before returning. But when conflicts drag on for years, internally displaced persons also migrate across national borders. Due to a lack of regular migration opportunities, this migration usually takes place without a

legal basis. It is rarely possible to make a clear distinction between those who leave their home for economic, political or other reasons.

6 Environmental factors

Global environmental changes have a detrimental effect on living conditions in many parts of the world. These changes include the drying up of water sources, the erosion of farmland, deforestation, the loss of biodiversity and the consequences of climate change. Even today, these changes are leading to supply crises and to people having to leave their places of origin. Environmental damage may exacerbate other causes of migration, for example by fuelling distribution conflicts or destabilising governments. As a rule, it is the already marginalised sections of the population who leave their homes. However, a lack of other opportunities means that these environmental migrants often remain in their own countries.

7 Migration policy

Migration policy influences how many people with which socio-economic characteristics are able to migrate. Since the "refugee crisis" of 2015 at the latest, it has been the goal of the EU to limit (irregular) migration as much as possible. Since then, the number of people seeking protection has fallen significantly. As there is simultaneously no EU-wide concept for orderly and regular migration from countries outside the EU, the policy is likely to ensure that, for the time being, migration in the near future does not come close to 2015 and 2016 levels.

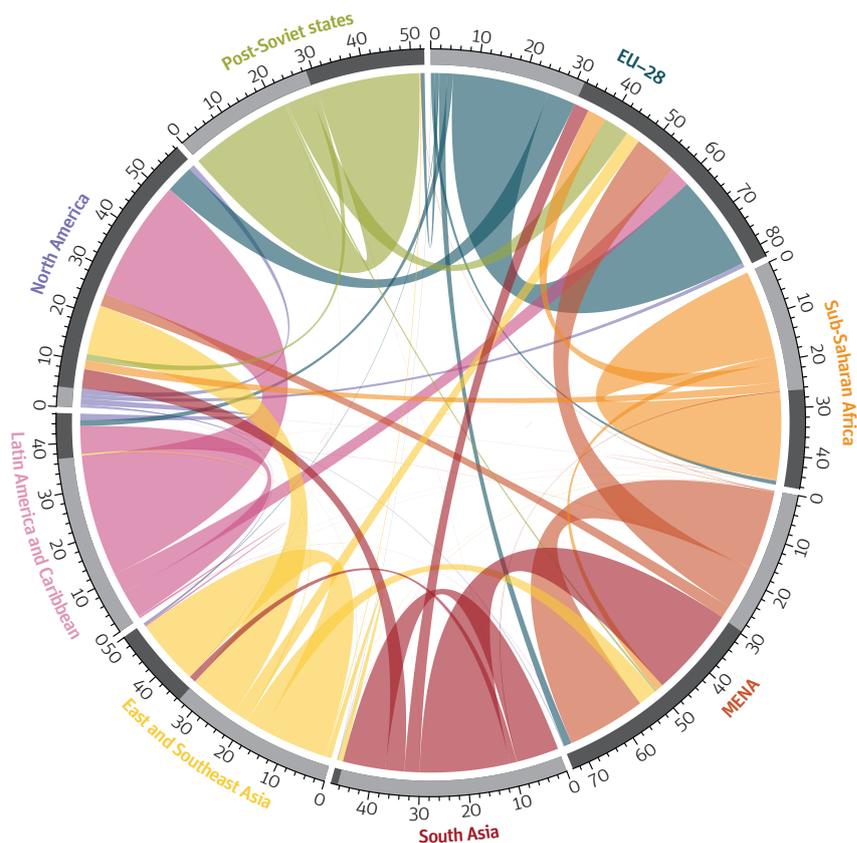
Wish and reality

Surveys conducted by the Gallup market and opinion research institute show that around 750 million people worldwide can imagine moving to another country if they have the opportunity – that is 15 percent of the world's adult population. At 33 percent, the wish to migrate is greatest in sub-Saharan Africa. In Latin America and the Caribbean, where the wish has risen the most since 2010, the figure is 27 percent, in the MENA region 24 percent. But even within the EU, 21 percent are considering emigrating. In contrast, in the various regions of Asia, the figure is only 7 to 8 percent. Globally, 21 percent of potential migrants – or 158 million people – say the USA is their desired destination. Germany, France and the United Kingdom would be attractive for at least 42, 36 and 34 million people respectively.

Even if these figures sound alarming to some, they reflect wishes but not reality: Not even ten percent of those who can imagine migrating are actually planning to do within the next twelve months. The majority of these people are men, young adults, from urban environments and, usually, with at least a level of secondary education. Ultimately, less than half a percent of the world's adult population, that is around 23 million people, are taking concrete steps to emigrate, such as obtaining money or visas for migration.

Main destinations within the region of origin

When people relocate, they usually only do so over short distances. Most of them remain in their own country, with significantly fewer crossing a border and rarely leaving their own greater region. Internationally, typical migration patterns can be seen, which often have historical reasons and are reinforced by exchange with compatriots who have already emigrated. As can be seen from the graphic, the vast majority of migrants from the post-Soviet states or sub-Saharan Africa remain within their regions. The largest cross-regional immigrant groups include Latin Americans in the United States and people from South Asia in the MENA region. Many Indian migrant workers live in the United Arab Emirates (3.3 million) or Saudi Arabia (2.3 million).



- International migrants from
- International migrants in

International migrants by selected regions of origin and destination (data indicates international migrant stock at mid-year, reflecting past migrations), in millions, 2017

(Source: UN DESA¹⁸)

Regional differences

The most important migration factors differ across world regions and, within each region, from country to country. Accordingly, the migration potential for the EU varies according to region.

Sub-Saharan Africa

Population (2020): 1.1 billion
Migrants within/outside own region: 18.8/8.3 million
Migrants in the EU-28: 4.0 million

Sub-Saharan Africa has by far the highest population growth in the world and the youngest population. Currently 1.1 billion people live there and this figure is expected to almost double by 2050, with the greatest demographic pressure in West and Central Africa. Most inhabitants of the region do not have the means and opportunities to migrate over longer distances to Europe. The proportion of people in the EU who were born in Africa is less than one percent. They live mainly in countries with a colonial past, France, the UK, Belgium and Portugal. The migration potential from sub-Saharan Africa is expected to increase significantly due to strong population growth, because many of the countries are developing in terms of education and prosperity, but also due to ongoing conflict and climate change, which is likely to worsen the supply situation in many places. The long-term income disparity between sub-Saharan Africa and the EU, the relative proximity across the Mediterranean and the existing diaspora in Europe encourage migration.

Middle East and North Africa (MENA)

Population (2020): 548.2 million
Migrants within/outside own region: 16.9/13.1 million
Migrants in the EU-28: 9.3 million

The MENA region with its 548 million inhabitants is home to the second youngest population in the world. It is expected to grow by a further 13 percent until 2030. Educational levels have risen in the recent past, fertility rates have fallen – a good prerequisite for a demographic dividend, a development boost owing to a favourable age structure. But a lack of prospects for young job-seekers and ongoing conflicts in the region are the main reasons for the growing wish to migrate, which is predominantly to countries in the region itself. MENA is home to around 7 percent of the world's population, but about 18 percent of all migrants worldwide. Europe is the main destination for long-range migration, with France, Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands the countries with the strongest migration networks. In 2017, around 9.3 million immigrants from the MENA region lived in the EU, primarily from Turkey (2.7 million), Morocco (2.5 million) and Algeria (1.6 million). Conflicts such as those in Libya and Yemen and the tense political situation in populous countries such as Egypt and Turkey can trigger major, albeit unpredictable, migration movements. In addition, MENA is the hottest and driest region in the world and climate change will significantly exacerbate the already existing shortage of drinking water. Even if environmental changes in themselves do not trigger large-scale migration, they increase the likelihood of conflicts in unstable political situations.

South Asia

Population (2020): 1.9 billion
Migrants within/outside own region: 9.1/29.3 million
Migrants in the EU-28: 3.3 million

Only a small proportion of the people in South Asia have aspirations to migrate. In view of the region's 1.9 billion inhabitants and sustained high population growth in countries such as Pakistan and Afghanistan, coupled with high unemployment, this does nevertheless result in considerable potential for migration, although this extends predominantly to neighbouring countries. Refugee migration from Afghanistan is also likely to concentrate on Pakistan and Iran. In 2017, 3.3 million people from South Asia lived in the EU. Most of them come from India, the second most populous country in the world, Pakistan and Bangladesh. Its former colonial ties make the United Kingdom the most important destination country in the EU with almost two million inhabitants born in South Asia. Due to rising levels of education in the growing middle classes, particularly in India, and an oversupply of labour, the migration of skilled workers is likely to continue. As skilled migrants from the region become more and more in demand on the international labour market, the question arises as to how many of them the EU can attract. So far, however, the trend amongst these people has been to move to the USA and Canada.

East and Southeast Asia

Population (2020): 2.3 billion
Migrants within/outside own region:
14.2/21.5 million
Migrants in the EU-28: 3.0 million

There are a number of reasons why, by international standards, there is a low desire for migration within East and Southeast Asia: In many places, economic growth and higher education have created new prospects for people. Population growth in the region is slowly coming to a halt and is likely to begin shrinking from 2035 onwards. In Japan, China and South Korea, there are no longer enough children being born to replace those people retiring. These countries themselves will need immigration in the medium term. Migration takes place largely within the region, with North America and Australia high on the list of migration destinations. Only then does Europe follow, with three million people from East and Southeast Asia living there, one million of them from China. Further immigration is expected, especially from China, even if the population there is no longer growing, as well as from Indonesia, Vietnam and the Philippines, where population growth is expected to continue until around 2050.

Post-Soviet states

Population (2020): 290.2 million
Migrants within/outside own region:
22.0/7.6 million
Migrants in the EU-28: 5.5 million

In the republics of the former Soviet Union, the proportion of people with migration aspirations remains constant at around 15 per cent and thus is relatively low in comparison with other regions. Low birth rates mean that the population of the region is no longer growing, it is already ageing strongly in many places. Migrants primarily move to look for employment and predominantly within their own region. This is mainly due to a common language, established networks and a good migration infrastructure. It is unlikely that this will change fundamentally in the future. Only if the political and economic situation in individual countries should deteriorate significantly could the EU become a more important migration destination for potential migrants. In Russia, for example, the proportion of the population wishing to migrate has recently grown significantly.

Latin America and Caribbean

Population (2020): 663.5 million
Migrants within/outside own region:
6.0/31.6 million
Migrants in the EU-28: 4.4 million

The USA is by far the most important destination country for migrants from Latin America and the Caribbean. But the EU, and particularly Spain, Portugal and Italy, are also attractive destinations for migrants. The two regions are linked by common languages, historical ties and a large diaspora. The demographic pressure in Latin America is only slight because the population grows very little and is already ageing in many places. The proportion of people aged between 20 and 39, the age group characteristic of migration, will begin to fall by 2030. The comparatively high desire to migrate, however, is based on relatively good educational levels combined with poor labour market conditions and income opportunities. Crises and conflicts such as those in Nicaragua or Venezuela are currently increasing the migratory pressure. As the USA is increasingly sealing its southern border, some of those willing to migrate could look to Europe as their new destination.

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