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Challenges and Opportunities of the EU Migration Policy¹

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Abstract: - The strategies for managing the international labour flows become an integral part of the debate and the European Community's political agenda. Against the backdrop of rigidities and imbalances strongly rooted in labour markets in some Member States, the European Economic and Monetary Union cannot promote competitiveness and economic growth without additional labour force. The paper will try to analysis the impact (demographic and socio-economic) of migration on EU. In my opinion, the outcome of migration can be stronger only if the level of immigration training is high, competing with the native population. The structure of the population by field of activity shows that many people in the Central and Eastern European countries can be competitive with the native population, which explains the much higher employment rate among EU migrant workers than the average EU employment rate. In order to avoid potential negative effects (social dumping, increasing the risk of dismissal of workers in the indigenous population), there are required the flexibility of the labour market institutions throughout the EU and the strengthening of social protection systems in all Member States. The research methodology is based on the analysis of the statistical data provided by the Eurostat, as well as a qualitative analysis relying on EU documents in this field and migration theories and literature review.

Key-Words: migration, impact, employment, unemployment, integration, SWOT
JEL Classification: F22, J08, J21, J18

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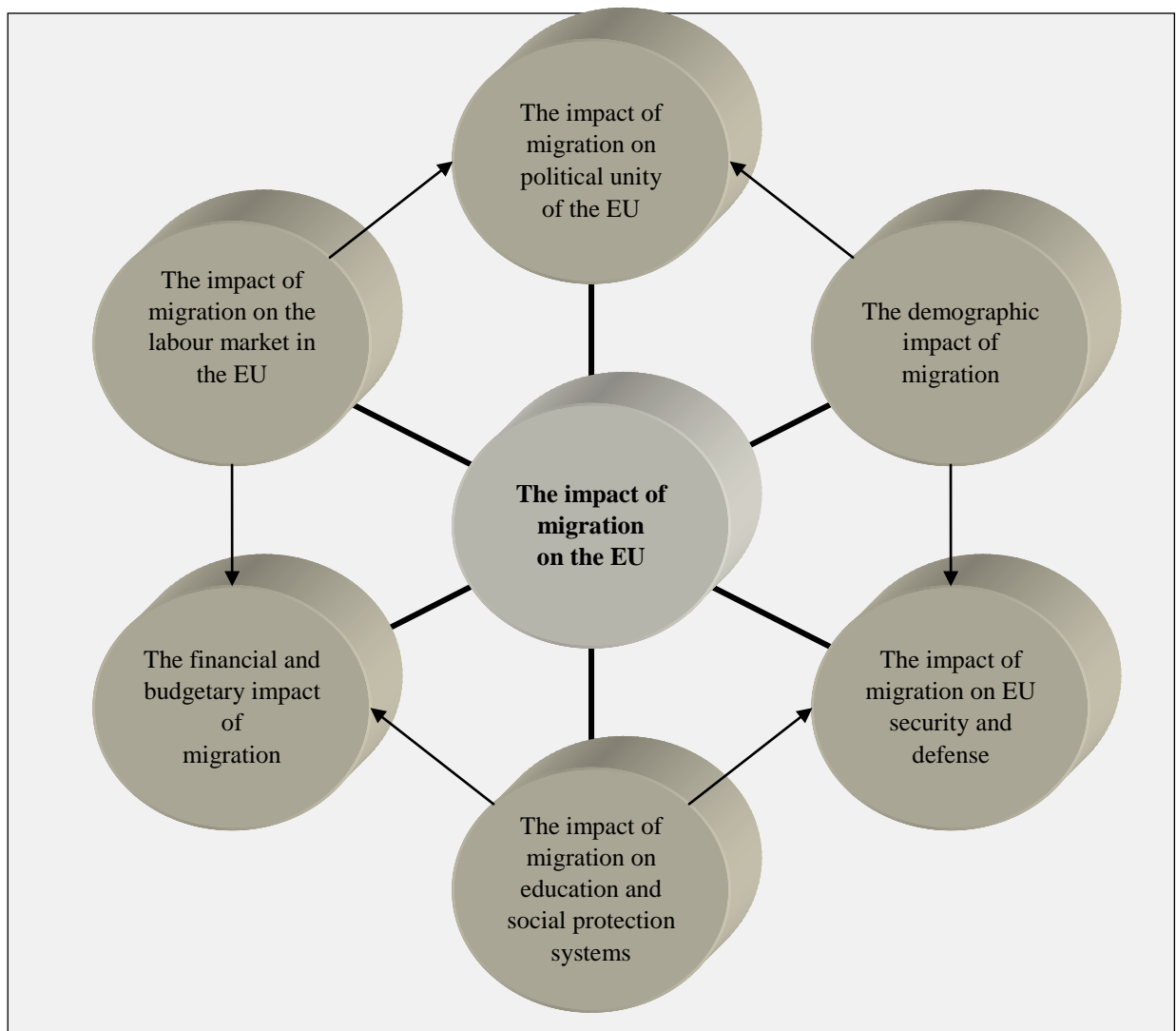
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1. Introduction

The phenomenon of migration involves the movement of people (individuals, families or groups) from one place to another with the intention of permanently or temporarily settling in a new location. Migration can be voluntary (seeking a job) or forced (by war, natural disasters). Depending on the migrant's place of origin, migration in EU is divided into two types: intra-community migration (from one Member State to another) and extra-community migration (outside EU space).

The study aims to analyse a number of demographic, economic and social issues and to identify the impact of migration on the EU as a whole and on the Member States in order to find ways to manage the phenomenon more effectively and to integrate faster and to a high level, to the benefit of both native population and migrants (Figure 1). The ultimate goal is to turn this major challenge of migration into an opportunity to stimulate sustainable economic and social development and to offset the demographic deficit facing the EU.

Figure 1: Challenges of the EU Migration Policy



Source: Figure developed by the author.

The free movement of workers can be viewed in sociological terms as intra-community migration, with a strong negative impact on the demographic balance of migrants' countries of origin, especially since young, active, working people are determined and prepared to emigrate looking for a job and a better life. One of the most significant negative effects of emigration is the so-called phenomenon of "brain drain", which is the loss of educated and highly qualified workforce.

In 2015, Romania, Poland, and the UK were the countries with the largest migratory flows, followed by Germany, Italy and Spain. Most of the new Member States still have higher emigration rates than the EU average, with the highest levels found in Lithuania, Latvia, Poland and Romania (two to three times the EU average). Also, migration has continued to grow in Estonia, Croatia, Hungary and Slovenia over the past two years.

On the other hand, there is also a positive economic impact of intra-community migration, as the country of origin earns in the short and medium term from the remittances of those working in other Member States. According to the World Bank estimates, after three years of consecutive decline, remittances sent to Europe and Central Asia rose 20.9 percent in 2017. The most important money transfers in this region were to Russia (\$8 billion in 2017, compared with \$6.7 billion in 2016), Ukraine (\$7.9 billion in 2017 versus \$6.1 billion in 2016) Poland (\$6.8 billion in 2017 compared to \$6.1 billion in 2016) and Romania (\$4.9 billion compared with \$3.5 billion in 2016) (The World Bank, 2018).

As for the countries of destination, migration (intra-community and extra-community) has a positive impact by gaining educated workforce, lowering labour costs and positive immigrants' contribution to economic growth but it can also produce negative effects by fueling labour market conflicts, increasing social costs related to migrant integration and, the last but not the least, the danger of escalating conflicts of a cultural or ethnic nature. With regard to the impact on wages, it can be limited by preventing wage cuts below the legal level, avoiding the so-called phenomenon of “social dumping”. The negative impact on public finances in the destination countries as a result of the costs associated with migrant social assistance programs is offset by their integration into the labour market and the increase in the number of taxpayers. On long-term, migration can have a positive impact on reducing the burden of social security budgets in many Member States, as a result of the ageing of the population.

According to the European Commission's report on intra-community migration in 2017, Germany and the UK were the main countries of destination of intra-community migrants, with around 50% of migrants in the EU-28 going into these two countries (Fries-Tersch, Tugran, Rossi & Bradley, 2018). This phenomenon is due to the fact that, starting with 2015, the migration flows in both countries gradually increased, and net mobility in Germany and the UK was about four times higher than in any other Member State. The UK hosts the largest number of employees from other Member States over the past ten years (1.8 million people) and Germany is considered “a traditional destination country”, with massive inflows over the past two years of 1.4 million extra-community migrants. In addition, EU citizens' annual inflows to Germany increased by more than 250% between 2009 and 2015, while in the UK they increased by 60% (similar to EU growth).

It should not be neglected that the issue of free movement of labour continues to be a hot topic on the community agenda, as it has been the subject of heated debates linked to Brexit. Future regulatory developments will mainly depend on the ability of Member States to find solutions that are favourable to all stakeholders while still respecting the principles of free movement of labour.

Spain and Italy continue to be important destination countries for both intra- and extra-EU migration, after Germany and the UK, but they have not regained their attractiveness existing before the 2008 crisis. For three years (2013-2015), migrant inflows into both countries were lower than in 2009, especially in Italy, where only half of the 2009 entry level was recorded. Another country of major destination is France, with the fifth largest number of migrants in the EU-28 and a significant entry of migrants in 2015. After a steady rise in 2009, migrant entrances to Austria were higher than those in Italy in 2015, making Austria the third country of destination in the EU in 2015. The Netherlands and Sweden are other major destination countries, which have also seen increases in migrant labour inputs in recent years (Eurostat, 2018a).

2. Migration theories and literature review

According to Hein de Haas (2014), the migration theories are based on four analytical dimensions:

- *the size of the levels*: macro, mezzo and micro, depending on which different conceptual analysis tools are used;

- *the geographical dimension and regional dimension* have an important influence on applied theories. Thus, neoclassical theory, which is based on the assumption that migration is stimulated primarily by rational economic considerations of benefits and costs, can be applied primarily to migration from rich countries where most people face relatively few mobility constraints;
- *the chronological dimension*, according to which the migration may vary depending on certain periods of time favourable to the movement;
- *the social dimension*, which implies that migration is a socially differentiated process, given that migration has varying degrees of applicability depending on migrants' occupations, abilities, income or ethnic groups. The social class to which the migrant belongs has a greater significance than ever, in accordance to the immigration policies increasingly favouring those with a certain social and professional status. Hein de Haas (2014) points out that “the poor migrate just as much as the rich”, but they make it shorter and often unfavourable, with the danger that their “illegal” status will facilitate their exploitation.

Boswell (2008) considers that when analysing migration, it is difficult to delineate clearly the boundaries of economic discipline to those of the social structure, based on a uniform concept of rationality, which implies that individuals want to maximize their usefulness by rational means. In other words, individuals will act to maximize their usefulness in terms of opportunities, but also taking into account external constraints.

Stark (1991) asserts that the family decisively influences the individual's decision to take the risk of seeking a new job in different labour markets. As such, in the author's opinion, a group of people, not one individual, are the basis for making decisions about maximizing utility. His hypothesis is that individuals have a fundamental interest in the well-being of the family (group) that is incompatible with an egoistic self-decision ontology for the individual. In Stark's opinion, the decision on migration involves replacing the individual decision-maker with a well-defined unit (family or household), similar to the one in which microeconomics considers the firm to be a profit maximization unit.

Kurekova (2011) points out that, with the accession of the new Central and Eastern European countries to the EU, the neoclassical theory, which considers that migration is influenced mainly by the differences in labour market opportunities, could be tested. Kurekova (2011) points out that the community migration is determined by the real wage differences between countries that have heterogeneous degrees of labour market development. According to this theory, migration is determined by the geographical differences in supply and demand on the labour market, as well as by the differences resulting from wages between labour-rich countries and capital-rich countries.

Vanselow, Liebig & Koplanis (2016) point out that most empirical studies on the role of labour market migration refer to the aggregate or specific impact at the local level, rather than the analysis of concrete case studies. Most of these authors' research shows that there is no major negative effect of immigration on local wages nor on jobs, while a small proportion of analyses show that there is only a minimal effect on the labour market in the country of destination. In the authors' opinion, the fact that the impact remains at a minimum level is due to several factors, namely:

- the skills of migrants often complement those of natives;
- the native population occupies the highest places on the occupational scale compared to the migrants;
- the flexibility of the local labour force is superior to migrants;
- the impact of migration can be diminished through the adjustment processes, for example through changes in industrial structure and production technologies, as well as through the capital flows.

3. Integration versus assimilations

The EU Agenda for Migration sets as a priority objective the “effective integration of migrants”. Under the current budgetary exercise (2014-2020), at least one fifth of the resources of the European Social Fund for Social Inclusion of Migrants is directed with a special focus on the protection of refugees and their children.

Integration has become a common term, frequently used at both Community and Member State levels in political documents and debates. Social integration implies a good knowledge of the characteristics and culture of the host country by migrants, but also the recognition of the distinctive character of immigrant culture by the majority population, and last but not the least “a mutual respect”. For migrants, integration involves a process of acceptance of the new adoption culture, the acquiring of citizens' rights, the access to social status and the achievement of a status in society, the building of interpersonal relationships with the members of the receiving society and the formation of feelings of belonging to society (King & Lulle 2016).

Assimilation means the complete erosion of the differences between migrants and the host society and involves the dominant role of the recipient country. In a number of Member States, it is preferable to assimilate migrants to the detriment of integration, and in some cases, there is an attempt to rehabilitate the concept, being considered as an optimal solution for preserving the “European identity” and promoting “Europeanization”.

At the pole, *multiculturalism* recognizes, and even appreciates, the diversity of culture brought by migrants of different origins and allows them to openly practice their cultures, but in some of these cases the EU is facing the challenges of *segregation*, the emergence of conflicts between certain values of extra-community cultures and the “European” principles of democracy, gender equality and human rights (King & Lulle, 2016).

4. The demographic impact of migratory flows

According to Eurostat data (2018a), in 2015, the year of the migration boom in the EU (especially the extra-community one) about 4.7 million people immigrated to one of the EU-28 member states. Of the 4.7 million immigrants registered in 2015, it is estimated that around 2.4 million were third country nationals, 1.4 million were citizens of another EU Member State than the destination country, about 860 000 were citizens of the EU Member State of destination (e.g. “returning home” or foreign-born) and about 19,000 were stateless.

Germany reported the highest total number of immigrants (1,543,800) in 2015, followed by the United Kingdom (613,500), France (363,900), Spain (342,100) and Italy (280,100). In parallel, Germany reported the largest number of emigrants in 2015 (347,200), followed by Spain (343,900), Great Britain (299,200), France (298,000) and Poland (258,800). In 2015, 17 of the EU Member States reported a higher share of immigration than emigration, but in Bulgaria, Ireland, Greece, Spain, Croatia, Cyprus, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Latvia and Lithuania the number of emigrants exceeded the number of immigrants.

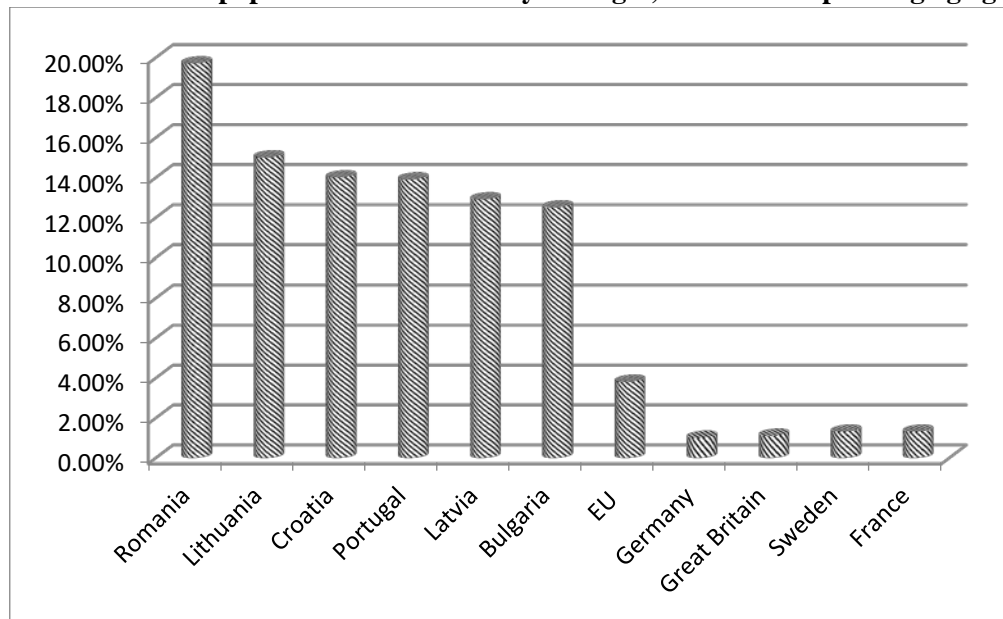
Concerning gender distribution of immigrants from EU Member States in 2015, there was a slight prevalence of males versus women (56% versus 44%). The Member State with the largest share of male immigrants was Germany (63%); in contrast, the largest share of female immigrants was recorded in Cyprus (57%). In 2015, immigrants from the EU Member States were, on average, much younger than the total population resident in their country of destination, given that the average age of immigrants was 27.5 years in the EU-28.

Subsequently, in 2016, the number of immigrants fell to 4.3 million people. Of these, 2.0 million people were third-country nationals, 1.3 million citizens of a Member State other than the one they emigrated, around 929,000 people were foreign-born nationals or nationals and about 16,000 were stateless. Germany reported the highest total number of immigrants (1,029,900) in 2016, followed by the UK (589,000), Spain (414,700), France (378,100) and Italy (300,000).

On 1 January 2017, the number of people residing in an EU Member State with a third-country nationality amounted to 21.6 million, representing 4.2% of the EU-28 population. In addition, on the same date, 16.9 million people lived with the citizenship of another EU Member State in one of the EU Member States. In absolute terms, the largest number of non-resident citizens living in EU Member States were located in Germany (9.2 million people), Great Britain (6.1 million), Italy (5.0 million), France (4.6 million) and Spain (4.4 million). The foreign citizens in these five Member States together accounted for 76% of the total number of foreigners living in all EU Member States, while the same five Member States had a 63% share in the EU-28 population. In contrast, foreign citizens represented less than 1% of the population of Poland and Romania (0.6% each) and Lithuania (0.7%).

A percentage of 3.8% of EU citizens of working age (20-64 years) resided in a Member State other than their nationality in 2017. This share increased from 2.5% ten years ago. The situation varies among Member States from 1.0% in Germany to 19.7% for Romania. High rates of migrant workers were registered by Lithuania (15.0%), Croatia (14.0%), Portugal (13.9%), Latvia (12.9%) and Bulgaria (12.5%). The EU Member States with the lowest share of mobile nationals (of the total population of the country) are Germany (1.0%), the UK (1.1%), Sweden and France (both with 1.3%). Compared to 2007, the share of Romanian nationals living in another Member State increased by 12.3 percentage points, also recorded a significant increase Latvia (10.0 pp), Lithuania (9.5 pp) and Bulgaria (8.0 pp) (Figure 2). The employment rate of mobile EU citizens is 76.1%, a high level compared to the total employment rate at the Community level, which is 72.1% (Eurostat, 2018c).

Figure 2: EU labor migrant workers (20-64 years) by country of citizenship in 2017 (in% of the resident population in the country of origin, in the corresponding age group)



Source: Figure developed by the author based on data provided by Eurostat (2018c).

5. The socio-economic impact of migration on the labor market in the EU

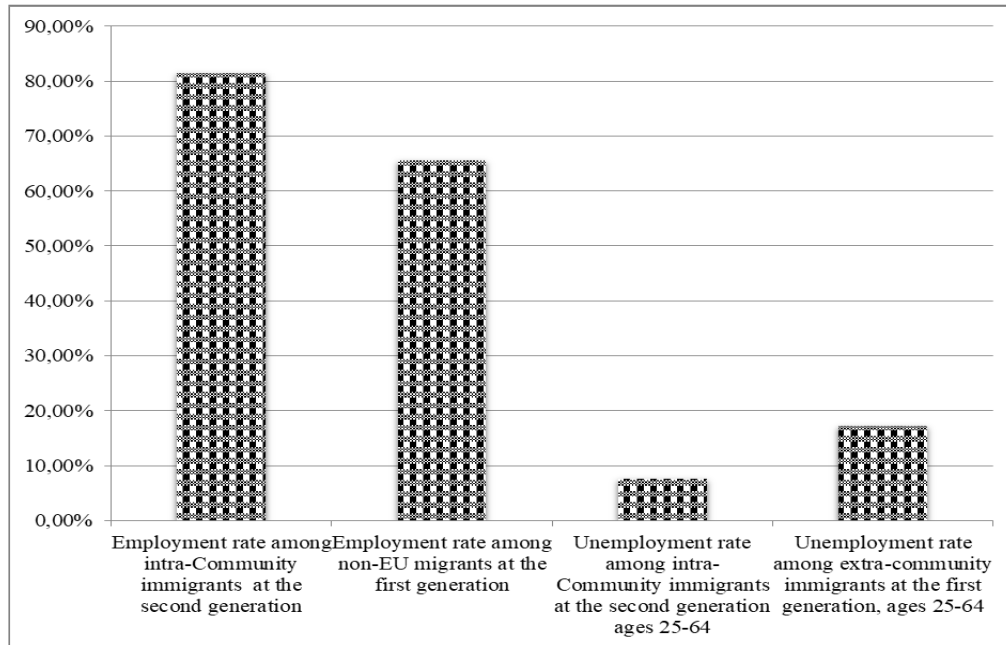
Ruhs & Vargas-Silva (2017) appreciated that the effects of immigration and potential changes in labour market participation rates cannot offset the decline in labour force in most European countries. According to the two specialists, *workforce deficits, which are already evident in many countries, are expected to persist and increase in the future.*

The group of Member States with employment rates above 70% includes: Great Britain, France, Germany, Ireland, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Finland and Portugal. The group of Member States with rates above 60% is concentrated in two areas: Western Mediterranean / Adriatic (Spain, Italy and Croatia) and the Eastern border of the EU, running from the Southern part of the Baltic Sea to the North end of the Black Sea (Poland, Slovakia, Romania, Bulgaria). In addition, Belgium is also included in this group of countries with employment rates of around 60%. A particular case is Greece with employment rates below 60%.

According to Eurostat (2016), the second-generation community immigrants represented the best integrated labour force group with an employment rate of 81.4% (above the European average), compared to 65,5% for extra-community immigrants in the first generation, in 2014. Among second-generation community immigrants, the gender pay gap between women and men was 7.5 percentage points, while for the first generation of migrants born outside the EU, it was 23.4 percentage points (Figure 3).

As far as unemployment is concerned, it is much higher among extra-community migrants. In 2014, the unemployment rate for first-generation immigrants from non-EU countries has risen to over 28% for those aged 15-29 and to 17.2% for the 25-54 age group. For the second-generation immigrants with non-EU origins, the gender gap was the highest (9.3% female unemployment rate, compared with 13.5% among men). On the other hand, the most integrated are the second-generation community migrants from the age group 25-54, with the unemployment rate of only 7.6% (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Employment rates and unemployment rates among immigrants in 2014 (%)



Source: Authors based on Eurostat data (2016)

The structural rigidities in EU labor markets caused that the workers shortages in most Member States to coexist with the existence of large groups of unemployed or inactive people, both among native citizens and migrants, who can also be affected by the new immigrants. On the other hand, given a very high youth unemployment rate (15-24 years), 15.3% in the EU-28 and 17.2% in the Euro zone in April 2018 and the existence of an inactive work force among young people or women, it is difficult to appreciate exactly what is the size of the real workforce shortage in some Member States.

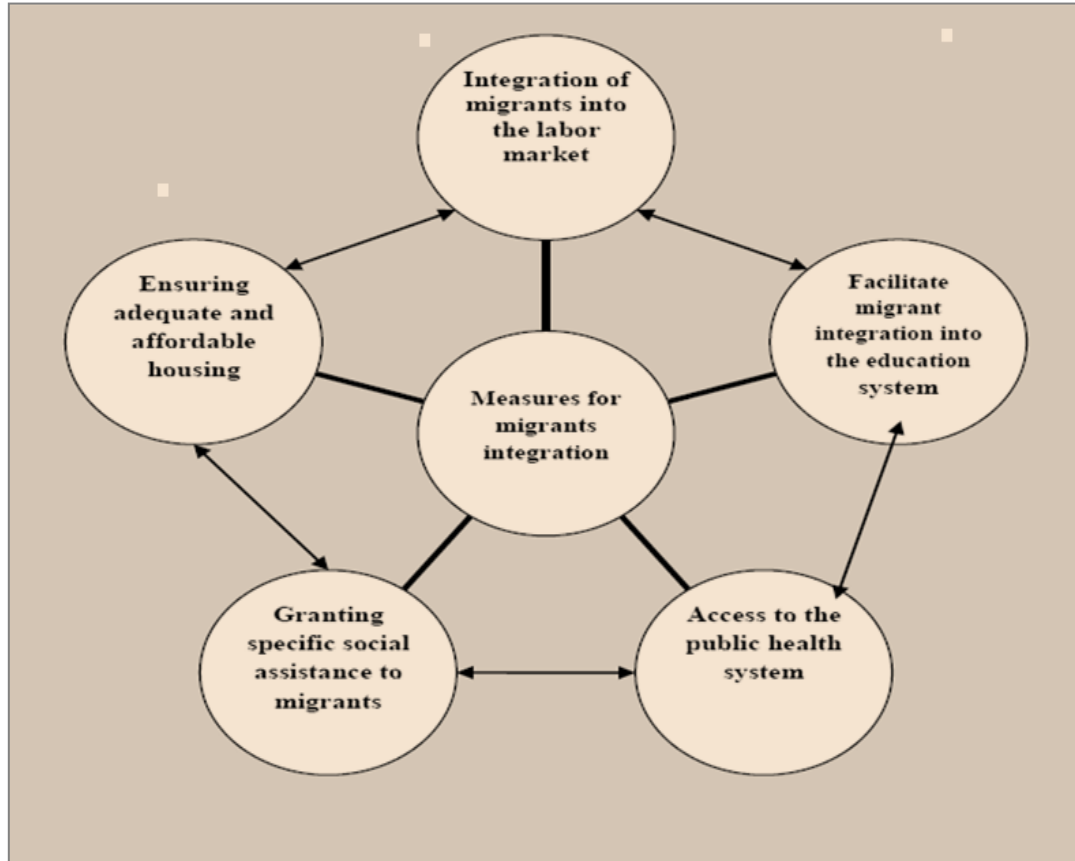
The segmentation of EU labour markets, corroborated with the differences in economic, social and institutional characteristics, has given rise to two distinct “migration regimes” in the countries of Northern and Southern Europe. The labour market imbalances are largely attributable to the structural rigidities. These include the lack of inter-regional geographic mobility accentuated by language barriers, the regulations restricting access to certain professions for citizens only, the inconsistencies between existing skills and those required on the labour market, and the cultural and socio-economic barriers involving the employment of migrants (especially low-paid jobs).

Dustmann, Glitz and Frattini (2008) consider that immigration can lead to the diversification of the mix of goods and services produced in the economy and can change the industrial occupational structure of the labour market. For example, immigration of low-skilled workers may extend the production (supply) of certain products (services) that use intensively low-skilled labor. The expansion of the respective sectors will then increase demand and lead to wage preservation. Similarly, immigration may change the technology used to produce (supply) certain products (services). In their opinion, the immigration of skilled workers can encourage the innovation and the adoption of technologies that require a higher qualification, which could again influence the demand for labour. Taking these theoretical aspects into account, the impact of immigration on wages and employment opportunities of existing workers varies depending on space (country or region) and time (economic boom, stagnation, crisis).

6. The measures for migrants' integration

According to OECD (2018), the integration of migrants is based on the implementation of sectoral support policies, which are presented in Figure 4.

Figure 4: The measures for migrants' integration



Source: Figure developed by the author

- **Integration of migrants into the labour market.** Labour demand (skilled / unskilled) that can be provided by migrants varies greatly in geographical space, so a number of regions have developed mechanisms to assess their demand and attract the necessary workforce from other areas. Local employment agencies can make the most effective link between the skills and needs of the local labour market by managing databases containing information on the newcomers' skills.
- **Ensuring adequate accommodation.** The real estate sector, and in particular small rent houses, are very demanding in major cities, and the social housing sector is very limited in a number of countries. For migrants, finding a home is a necessary step for legality and a prerequisite for registering as a resident in a locality. Migrants often encounter difficulties in accessing good housing due to regulations or discrimination issues.
- **Proving social assistance and access to the public health system.** The local social authorities ensure the provision of basic social services (shelters, showers, food) that often address the basic needs of migrants. In addition, some cities supplement social benefits (family support, child benefits, unemployment benefits, etc.) and provide health services tailored to the needs of migrants (prevention, primary care, hospitals and health centers).
- **Promoting access to the education system.** In general, the purpose of the education system is to quickly transfer migrant children from special classes to ordinary classes in the public education sector,

avoiding the concentration of migrant students in certain schools. Another measure concerns the reduction of barriers for migrant students to vocational education. Moreover, OECD (2018) specialists recommend shorter training time for people who cannot afford to live on long-term apprentices' wages. According to the same source, several countries (e.g. Australia, Denmark, Germany, Switzerland) provide adult apprentices with relevant work experience to finish faster than the standard length of training.

7. Conclusions

According to the migration theories, in the context of formulating public policies in EU, a clear distinction must be made between migrants for economic reasons, who are generally looking for better paid jobs and are mostly young entrepreneurs, and political migrants or refugees, among whom there are many people who cannot be active on the labour market (children, the elderly), but also people with modest skills, who are more vulnerable to discrimination both on the labour market, and in society, and require additional social protection from the state.

In order to have a clearer picture of migration, many specialists have analysed the economic effects of this phenomenon on the Member States. Recent studies on European integration and the free movement of labour reveal that destination Member States have benefited from EU enlargement by developing business and migrant labour opportunities. On the other hand, these studies show that the income earned by immigrants does not burden the native population, as these incomes are lower than their profits. Labour migration also has an incentive effect on investment and domestic consumption. As such, it offers host countries more net benefits than social costs.

Some researchers in the field show that the immigration process can only have a minimal effect on unemployment in the Member States. In this respect, a distinction needs to be made between the distribution of jobs in the EU and the creation of new jobs (especially in elderly care, small-scale construction, low-skilled jobs, etc.), which do not address the native population.

As far as the negative impact of migration on wages is concerned, it will be limited by preventing wage cuts below the statutory level, avoiding the so-called “social dumping” phenomenon. Also, the negative impact of migration on public finances is negligible, influencing even positively the reduction of the burden on social security budgets (in the context of ageing population), by increasing the number of taxpayers.

In my opinion, the impact of migration can be stronger only if the level of immigration training is high, competing with the native population. The structure of the population by field of activity shows that many people in the Central and Eastern European countries can be competitive with the native population, which explains the much higher employment rate among EU migrant workers than the average EU employment rate. In order to avoid potential negative effects (social dumping, increasing the risk of dismissal of workers in the indigenous population), the flexibility of the labour market institutions throughout the EU and the strengthening of social protection systems in all Member States.

With the integration of the Central and Eastern European countries, a much freer flow of labour has been ensured, which has led to a more efficient allocation of human resources, has stimulated the production efficiency and has helped to increase the competitiveness of EU products. Also, the free movement of people has boosted the growth of welfare across the EU in destination countries by increasing contributions to social security and taxes paid by migrant workers and in home countries by increasing remittances.

The rapid technological changes and the new qualifications required by the labour market demand a re-evaluation of the necessary skills. The selective migration policies, which are focused on employment and are useful to meet specific short-term labour market demand, cannot be the basis for an effective long-term policy without a process of effective integration of migrants and their families.

Elaborating effective migration policies is based on the successful implementation of measures to integrate migrants not only on the labour market but also in the host society. Katseli (2004) points out that given the complexity of the process, most Member States' governments have tried to keep migration integration issues at the minimum level on the internal political agenda. Their attempts to deal with the problems took the form of either defensive tactics or crisis management by tightening border controls or implementing selective immigration programs and massive regularization.

In conclusion, it is advisable that strategies for managing international labour flows become an integral part of the various economic and social debates and an important issue on the Community's political agenda. Against the backdrop of rigidities and imbalances strongly rooted in labour markets in some Member States, EMU cannot promote competitiveness and economic growth without additional labour force at EU level (Table 1).

Table 1: The SWOT synthesis of the migration impact in EU

<p style="text-align: center;">STRONG POINTS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increasing the labour supply; • increasing employment; • increase labour productivity; • increasing the competitiveness of EU products. 	<p style="text-align: center;">WEAKNESSES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reducing wages on short-term; • increasing unemployment among existing workers with qualifications similar to those of migrants; • segregation, marginalization and difficulties of integration of migrants into society.
<p style="text-align: center;">OPPORTUNITIES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • diversifying the mix of goods and services produced in the economy; • stimulating economic growth; • increasing innovation and cutting-edge technology by attracting skilled migrants. 	<p style="text-align: center;">THREATS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the emergence of conflicts between host country workers and migrant workers; • increased unemployment and social spending in the host countries if migrant workers integration is not effective.

Source: Author after different sources

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