



**Track:Europe**

**Dialogue:**

**Title:European Migration Policy Options**

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### **Key issues (300 words)**

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1.International migration is caused by major economic, demographic, political, and security gaps between sending and receiving countries. This is particularly true for the migrationflows between the MiddleEast/NorthAfrica and Europe. These imbalances explain why Europe is and will continue to be a major destination for migrants despite growing efforts to control and eventually reduce the inflow of asylum seekers and regular as well as irregular labor migrants.

2.Migration should be seen as a partial answer to both surplus labor supply in sending countries and aging and eventually shrinking domestic work forces in Europe. Migration can only play such a role if Europe is able to attract migrants with needed skill levels; and if these migrants have access to formal labor markets.

3.A permanent dialogue between the EU and sending countries could explore the possibility of cooperation in various migration-related fields. In principle sending and receiving countries have a common interest to explore win-win solutions that allow not only the countries and economies involved but also the migrants themselves to gain from geographic mobility of labor and skills.

### **Content (1200 words)**

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International migration is caused by major economic, demographic, political, and security gaps between sending and receiving countries. But international migration is also a process with the potential to reduce such gaps. Therefore, sending and receiving countries should explore win-win solutions that allow the countries and economies involved as well as the migrants to gain from geographic mobility of labor and skills.



These imbalances explain why Europe is and will continue to be a major destination for migrants, even in times of slow economic growth, high domestic unemployment in many EU countries, and growing efforts to control and eventually reduce the inflow of asylum seekers and regular and irregular labor migrants. In 2001 alone, some 1.47 million new immigrants lawfully took residence or claimed asylum in one of the 15 EU member states. On average, the annual net gain from migration of the EU-15 is just over 1 million people per year (about 2.2 per 1,000), which explains almost four-fifths of Europe's population growth.

Even if economic conditions in the sending countries were to improve, one should not expect the economic push factors to disappear quickly. The current levels of economic growth and job creation in sending countries in the wider Europe (in particular, MENA and Central Asia) and other parts of the world with migratory links to Europe (for example, Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia) are not sufficient to absorb the projected demographic growth and, in particular, growth of the labor force in these countries. Large cohorts will try to enter the labor market during the coming years, while unemployment and underemployment are already high.

One also has to bear in mind that the majority of migrants either do not come from the lowest-income countries, but rather from the middle-income countries, or they come from low-income countries but have a middle-class background. It seems that emigration only occurs once a certain level of development has been reached, which allows a first generation of potential emigrants to acquire the necessary means for leaving their home country. Therefore, a successful development process could in the short run lead to an increase in migration rather than a decrease—the so-called migration hump—before having a lasting impact on the outflow of people.

Today, Europe is home or host to a fifth of the world's migrant population. This almost equals the size of the foreign-born population in the US. Migration to Europe – mostly originating from the geographic vicinity – is related to major economic, demographic and political gaps between the EU and neighboring regions. While the EU is a relatively wealthy and politically stable world region with an aging and eventually shrinking population, neighboring countries to the south and southeast are much poorer and politically less stable, but have young and growing populations. In this situation migration from the poorer but demographically growing to the richer but demographically stagnating societies is almost inevitable. The first question therefore is how to manage – not how to prevent – migration to Europe.

In any case such migration might be in the interest of sending countries wanting to reduce pressure on their labor markets and to avoid the underutilization of skills. Sending countries also have a growing interest in remittances generated by their migrant diaspora. For some countries such remittances have become a major source of capital. At the same time such migration may be in the interest of the EU and its member states as a means to reduce current and future shortages of labor and skills.

Migration should be seen as a partial answer to both surplus labor supply in sending countries and aging and eventually shrinking domestic work forces in Europe. Migration can only play such a role if Europe is able to attract migrants with needed skill levels; and if these migrants have access to formal labor markets. To this end Europe will have to develop a



comprehensive migration policy that incorporates selection and admission procedures for people who qualify for economic reasons as temporary migrants or as permanent immigrants. Europe might also be in need of unskilled migrants. And Europe may have to pay more attention to the development of skills and qualifications in potential sending countries: for example by co-financing parts of the education system. This may counterbalance possible negative effects for sending countries linked to brain drain.

Experiences of traditional countries of immigration – in particular Australia, Canada and New Zealand – should be analyzed and adapted. In this context the EU and its member states also have to review and improve measures and rights facilitating the integration of long-term migrants and arrangements regulating access of migrants to social security benefits and services such as education and health. Higher attention should also be paid to the transferability of social insurance and benefits of migrants who return to their countries of origin, in particular health and pension benefits.

A permanent dialogue between the EU and sending countries could explore the possibility of cooperation in various migration-related fields. In principle sending and receiving countries have a common interest to explore win-win solutions that allow not only the countries and economies involved but also the migrants themselves to gain from geographic mobility of labor and skills. Issues for such a dialogue could be joint border management, agreements on visa regimes and labor permits, orderly departure and safe travel arrangements, living and working conditions of migrant workers and permanent immigrants, brain drain and skill formation, transferability and portability of claims towards social security, dual citizenship, channels and average costs of remittances. Such migration-related issues might also become elements of future trade, cooperation and association agreements between the EU and third countries.

All attempts to develop and implement coherent migration regimes as well as integration and citizenship policies need public support among domestic populations and polities of sending and receiving societies. It is therefore necessary to explain why and how shaping – not preventing – future migration to Europe, influencing the composition of the migrants, and incorporating those who will – and should – stay for an extended period of time can be managed in the best interest of both migrants and Europeans themselves.