

ANALYSIS OF ECONOMIC MIGRATIONS AND THEIR SOCIOLOGICAL CONSEQUENCES: A CASE STUDY OF MIGRATIONS AMONG EU MEMBER STATES

REVIEW ARTICLE

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Abstract: *This paper investigates the phenomenon of economic migration within the European Union (EU) and analyzes its economic and sociological implications. By employing methods of descriptive statistics, regression analysis, and qualitative analysis, the research examines trends in economic migration and the relationship between migration and macroeconomic indicators. The sociological consequences of economic migration vary, with studies highlighting challenges faced by migrants in securing employment, particularly low qualifications and working conditions.*

Despite existing challenges, economic migration within the EU also possesses positive aspects. Namely, these migrations contribute to increased economic productivity and competitiveness through the introduction of additional workforce, education, and high levels of work motivation. The integration of migrants into society displays variability, with social disparity necessitating analysis to recognize growth potential and support sustainable change.

This paper concludes that inter-country cooperation and the establishment of adequate policies are crucial to harnessing the advantages of economic migration while overcoming challenges related to integration and working conditions.

Keywords: economic migration, EU, macroeconomic analysis, sociological consequences of migration, migrant integration

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INTRODUCTION

Economic migrations are a long-standing phenomenon that has attracted significant attention in economic and sociological literature. Economic migrations are often viewed as a process in which individuals with low incomes from countries with lower living standards move to countries with higher living standards, in search of better economic conditions. Also, in the analysis of migrations, the concept of “migration capital” is often highlighted. This term encompasses the abilities and resources that migrants accumulate or acquire during their migratory movements, which then facilitate subsequent international moves. Previous experiences in migrations can reduce the perception of migration constraints and costs, leading to increased willingness to continue mobility (de Jong & de Valk, 2023).

For a more serious analysis of this phenomenon, descriptive statistical methods were used to investigate trends in economic migrations between EU member countries in recent years. Also, regression analysis was used to examine the relationship between economic migrations and macroeconomic indicators, such as GDP per capita, unemployment rate, and inflation rate. Finally, based on relevant research by other authors, qualitative analysis was used to consider the sociological consequences of economic migrations, such as the integration of migrants into society, cultural diversity, and political influence.

The number of economic migrants between EU member countries has been increasing in recent years. According to Eurostat data, the number of migrants in 2021 was 1.4 million who moved to a new EU country, representing an increase of 12.3% compared to 2020. The largest number of migrants in 2021 came from Poland (192,000), Romania (179,000), and Germany (174,000). Germany was the most popular destination for migrants in 2021 (it received 231,000 people), followed by Spain (161,000) and France (130,000). While Eurostat does not categorize migrations exclusively as economic, the data shows that employment is the most common reason for migration within the EU. In 2021, 46% of migrants cited employment as the main reason for moving (Eurostat, 2022).

It is important to emphasize that there is a significant relationship between economic migrations and macroeconomic indicators. Namely, a higher GDP per capita and a lower unemployment

rate are associated with a larger number of migrants, while a higher inflation rate has a negative impact on the number of migrants.

When it comes to the sociological consequences of economic migrations, there is a great variability in the integration of migrants into society. In this sense, the diversity of territories and different components of society, such as human, social, institutional, natural/physical, and economic elements, often lead to imbalances in social development.

This imbalance requires careful analysis to recognize growth potential and stimulate sustainable changes. It is particularly important to investigate new factors of inequality, which concern new socio-economic and spatial contexts that have emerged from the impacts of COVID-19 and/or climate change (Laine, Rauhut & Gruber, 2023). The sociological consequences of economic migration can also be felt on a political level. The political framework of economic migrations often plays a key role in shaping and directing migration flows, and migration policies reflect the specific economic and social interests of immigrant-receiving countries. This dynamic is often the result of a disagreement between the economic need for labor and the socio-political challenges that migrations can cause. One of the key factors is the fear of the potential negative impact of unskilled labor on the labor market, which can lead to an increase in income inequality and unemployment among the local population. This fear often serves as the basis for opposition to migrations (Ćosić, 2013).

In order to overcome challenges and realize the potential that economic migrations can have on the economy and society, cooperation between countries and the establishment of adequate policies that will enable the integration of migrants and prevent discrimination and prejudice are needed. In addition, it is important to emphasize that economic migrations between EU member countries have their advantages in increasing productivity and competitiveness of European economies. Macroeconomic analysis of economic migrations and their social consequences shows that economic migrations between EU member countries have their advantages and challenges. In order to realize the advantages and minimize the challenges, it is necessary to establish adequate policies and protective measures that will ensure integration and equal working conditions for all workers.

1. CONTEMPORARY TRENDS IN ECONOMIC MIGRATIONS IN EU MEMBER COUNTRIES

Economic migrants are individuals who move from their home country to another country for better economic prospects. This type of migration is a significant category of migrations in the member countries of the European Union, especially in the last few years. According to Eurostat data, in 2019, there were about 21.6 million foreign nationals living in EU member countries, of which economic migrants made up a significant portion.² This type of migration can be temporary or permanent, and is caused by various factors such as economic inequalities, demographic changes, political unrest, etc. In other words, economic migrants are motivated by various factors, such as seeking better business opportunities, higher wages, better living conditions, or simply a desire for new experiences. In addition, factors influencing this type of migration include demographic changes, political unrest, labor market changes, and social changes.

Economic migrations are often a source of concern and controversy, given the challenges they can pose for the society and economy of the host country, as well as for the countries of origin. The introduction of free movement of workers between EU member countries at the end of the last century, as well as the expansion of the Union to the east, has led to a significant increase in economic migrations in member countries.

There are several reasons for economic migrations to EU member countries. One of the most important reasons is the labor market, i.e., the need for labor in certain sectors, such as healthcare, construction, or information technology. Another important reason is the better economic situation in some member countries compared to others, which means that people are moving in search of better business opportunities and higher incomes. Also, the political situation and wars in some countries can be a reason for economic migrations. Economic migrants in EU

2 It is also important to highlight the data on the employment of migrants in the EU. According to a Eurostat report, in the second quarter of 2020, the employment rate among migrant workers in the EU-27 was 73.8%, which is about 3.3 percentage points lower compared to the employment rate in the population born in the EU. However, the employment rate of migrants varies from country to country and depends on various factors, such as legal regulations, social integration, language proficiency, education, etc.

member countries most often come from other member countries, but there are also large groups of people who come from countries outside the EU. Romanians, Poles, and Italians were among the largest groups of migrants born outside the country they live in the EU in 2022 (includes migrants within the EU and outside the EU). When looking at migrants from third countries (a person born outside the EU), the largest groups come from Morocco, Turkey, and Ukraine (Eurostat, 2022).

When we talk about trends in economic migrations in EU member countries, it is important to note that the situation is constantly changing. Also, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on economic migrations in EU member countries is not yet fully known, but it is already clear that it will have a significant impact on this phenomenon. For example, some member countries have temporarily suspended the arrival of labor from other countries, which will affect the total number of economic migrants. On the other hand, when it comes to the consequences of economic migrations in EU countries, there is a potential negative impact on employment and wages of the local population. Although this issue can be controversial, there are studies that indicate a connection between the increase in the number of economic migrants and negative impacts on employment and wages of the local population. Some researchers have found that the presence of immigrants in the workplace can lead to a decrease in wages and the number of employees for domestic workers, especially in sectors with lower qualifications and a higher share of migrants (Card, 1990; Borjas, 2003). Other researchers suggest that economic migrations can lead to negative impacts on employment and wages only in the short term, while in the long term they can have positive effects on the economy and increase overall employment (Dustmann et al., 2010; Jaeger et al., 2018).

In addition, there is also the question of the impact of economic migrations on social cohesion in European Union countries. Some researchers argue that a high level of immigration can lead to the polarization of society and an increase in ethnic tensions (Putnam, 2007; Algan & Cahuc, 2010). However, economic migrations do not have to lead to negative effects on social cohesion, but depend on the context in which migrations occur, as well as on political and social factors. Taking these factors into account, European Union countries are heavily involved in the develop-

ment of policies that could balance the benefits of economic migrations and reduce potential negative effects. This includes policies concerning the integration of immigrants into society and the workforce, as well as policies concerning the control and regulation of immigration.

2. SOCIOLOGICAL CONSEQUENCES OF ECONOMIC MIGRATION: INTEGRATION, CULTURAL DIVERSITY, AND POLITICAL INFLUENCE

The sociological consequences of economic migration are a topic that has been attracting increasing attention from academic researchers over the past few decades. The reason for this is the growing number of people moving to other countries in search of a better life and greater economic opportunities. Such migration can have a profound sociological impact on the countries that accept migrants.

One of the most important consequences of economic migration is the integration of migrants into the host country's society. Integration refers to the process of migrants adapting to a new social environment and accepting new values, norms, and practices. Integration is a key factor for the success of migration, both for the migrants themselves and for society as a whole. However, the integration of migrants can be challenging in different social contexts and can face various obstacles. Economic integration can lead to increased segregation and discrimination in the labor market. Integration can also be slowed down due to cultural and language differences that exist between migrants and the native population (Münz, 2007; Solano & De Coninck, 2023; Dorn & Zweimüller, 2021).

Integration can take place at different levels, such as integration into the labor market, the education system, and social institutions. However, the process of integration is not always straightforward and often carries numerous challenges. Many researchers have studied this topic and have come to different conclusions. According to some research, the integration of immigrants into society can be difficult, especially if there are cultural differences between immigrants and the native population. This can lead to segregation and marginalization of immigrants (Castles & Miller, 2009). On the other hand, other research shows that the integration of

immigrants can be relatively successful if there are appropriate integration policies and if immigrants feel accepted in society (Esser, 2004). It is important to emphasize the significance of education as one of the most important factors for successful integration of immigrants. Immigrants with higher education integrate more easily into society and the labor market and are less prone to discrimination. However, immigrants with a lower level of education and weaker language skills find it harder to integrate, have fewer employment opportunities, and are often forced to work in low-skilled jobs with low incomes (Koopmans, 2010). Therefore, investing in the education and language education of immigrants can positively impact their integration and reduce social tensions.

When it comes to cultural diversity, migrants often bring cultural diversity to the countries they come to. This can be a challenge for societies facing problems with the integration of migrants, as cultural diversity can lead to increased tensions and conflicts. Cultural diversity refers to the different cultural, ethnic, religious, and linguistic backgrounds of people living in one country. Cultural diversity can be positive and negative, depending on how it is treated. Positive cultural diversity can lead to richness in society, creativity, and innovation (Vertovec, 2010). However, negative cultural diversity can lead to ethnic tensions, racism, and discrimination (Banting & Kymlicka, 2013). Immigrants often have different cultural patterns and values from the native population, which can lead to cultural conflicts and resistance in society. Accordingly, it is important to understand cultural diversity and adapt to it to facilitate the integration of immigrants. Also, immigrants should be aware of the cultural norms and values of the host country and respect the values of the society they are coming to, and the native population should be open and accepting of cultural diversity.

Recently, one of the significant topics related to economic migrations in Europe is the political influence of immigrants. Namely, immigrants have the right to vote in the countries where they live and work, and their influence on political events in the host countries can increase. This can affect political and social processes in the host countries, especially the processes of making political decisions and elections (Blinder, 2015). On the other hand, political rhetoric often used in public discourse about immigration can cause an increase in societal polarization

and the creation of negative stereotypes towards immigrants. Namely, political leaders can use the issue of immigration to gain votes and gain popularity among voters. Such politicization of immigration can lead to the creation of opposing views and political divisions in society.

To avoid the negative effects of economic migrations, EU member states must adopt appropriate policies and strategies. In this sense, it is crucial to enable successful integration of immigrants into the host society through policies that will encourage education, language learning, and cultural exchange.

3. PROCESSES OF ASSIMILATION AND INTEGRATION OF ECONOMIC MIGRANTS: EXAMPLES OF BEST PRACTICES IN EU MEMBER STATES

The introduction of immigrants into the society of host countries represents a complex process in which various factors play a role, such as cultural differences, economic conditions, and access to social resources. The adaptation process of immigrants can involve various degrees of adoption of the values and norms of the new society (integration) and adaptation to the dominant culture (assimilation), without necessarily losing individual or group cultural identity. Many immigrants go through a process of acculturation, adopting some elements of the new culture while retaining their original culture. This process is dynamic and can result in different outcomes (Portes & Rumbaut, 2014; Vertovec, 2007; Strang & Ager, 2010).

Best practices in the processes of integration and assimilation of economic migrants in EU member countries are closely linked to the policies applied in individual countries. For example, Sweden is recognized for its comprehensive and holistic approach to the integration of migrants. Sweden provides language learning, education, and employment support to help migrants integrate into society. Germany has implemented several programs aimed at facilitating the integration of migrants into the labor market. This includes recognition of foreign qualifications, vocational education, and employment services. France has a well-established system for integrating new populations,

which includes mandatory training on civil society and language classes, while Austria stands out for its efforts in providing language and integration courses, as well as measures for recognizing foreign qualifications (Integration by Social and Digital Learning, 2019). Italy has implemented several innovative practices for the integration of immigrants, including projects aimed at promoting social inclusion and preventing discrimination (Lāce, 2020).

Another example of successful practices is the policy implemented by Denmark, known as flexicurity, which combines flexible employment conditions with high worker security (Andersen, 2011; Jensen, 2011). This policy facilitates access to the labor market for economic migrants, reducing unemployment and the risk of social exclusion. However, it is important to emphasize that the success of the integration and assimilation processes of economic migrants largely depends on the context in which the policies are applied. For instance, although Sweden is known for successful immigrant integration, in recent years there has been a deterioration in relations between the native population and immigrants due to economic and social problems, leading to a series of attacks and incidents against migrants (Davis, 2022; Henley, 2022; The Independent, 2022). Therefore, when developing policies for the integration and assimilation of economic migrants, it is important to consider broader social, economic, and political contexts and establish tailored strategies that respond to the specific needs and challenges of a particular country.

For successful integration of economic migrants into society, it is important to recognize cultural differences between them and the native population. According to Castles and Miller (2009), integration can be difficult if there are significant differences in culture, religion, customs, and values between immigrants and the native population. However, Esser (2004) argues that, despite these differences, integration can be achieved if immigrants are motivated to adapt to the new social environment, and if there are integration policies that support these processes. He believes that a migrant gradually integrates individually through social subsystems, which relate to the adoption of certain cultural traits, placement on the primary labor market, interethnic marriages, and emotional identification.

According to research by Koopmans (2010), countries that combined multicultural policies with a strong welfare state, such as Sweden, Belgium, and the Netherlands, showed relatively poor integration results. These countries had low labor market participation rates, high segregation rates, and a strong overrepresentation of immigrants among those convicted of criminal behavior. Countries that had more restrictive or assimilationist integration policies (Germany, Austria, Switzerland, France) or a relatively weak welfare state (United Kingdom) achieved better integration results.

In this regard, according to research conducted by Keith Banting and Will Kymlicka in 2013, there is a trend of withdrawal from the concept of multiculturalism in numerous countries, with a particular emphasis on European societies. This may be related to changes in the social context and political movements that have led to the redefinition of priorities in integration policies and cultural diversity. However, according to their analysis, many countries that adopted multicultural strategies at the end of the twentieth century have retained their programs in the early years of the new millennium, and some have even expanded their approaches. This indicates the complexity of the dynamics of multiculturalism and its ability to adapt to social changes.

In any case, the processes of integrating economic migrants into the society of EU member countries are of essential importance for successful migration management and for the formation of a society based on tolerance and respect for diversity. It is crucial to develop integration policies that support the adaptation of immigrants to social, economic, and cultural differences, while at the same time facilitating their inclusion in society.

CONCLUSION

Economic migrations represent a complex and multilayered phenomenon that requires a systematic and holistic approach. The processes of integration and assimilation of migrants into society are long-lasting and complex, but crucial for successful migration management. In this sense, examples of best practices in EU member countries offer very useful insights into how migrants can be successfully integrated and assimilated into society.

As emphasized in this paper, the integration and assimilation of migrants into society require appropriate policies, legislation, and an institutional framework. At the same time, it is necessary for society to accept and support the integration process, respecting the culture and diversity of migrants.

The relevant literature and research cited in this paper provide insight into best practices in migration management, as well as the challenges and obstacles present in this process. The sources show that it is important to establish international cooperation and coordination in migration management, as well as to ensure adequate protection and support for economic migrants.

Taking into account the importance of international cooperation and coordination in managing economic migrations, it is concluded that it is necessary for EU member countries to continue developing and implementing integrated policies and programs that will ensure efficient and fair migration management. Also, it is necessary to ensure the protection and rights of migrants, while simultaneously facilitating their integration into society. All of this will enable the creation of a more inclusive and fairer society, with better opportunities for everyone, including economic migrants, while a sociological approach to analyzing the processes of integration and assimilation of economic migrants into society is necessary in order to understand the complex field of interaction and dynamics among different social groups that arise from this process.

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