

## CURRENT TRENDS OF THE EUROPEAN UNION INTEGRATION POLICY AS A REACTION TO THE REFUGEE AND MIGRANT CRISIS 2015

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### Aktuálne trendy integračnej politiky Európskej únie ako reakcia na utečeneckú a migračnú krízu 2015

***Abstract:** Investing any resources and energy in integration policies today could contribute to making the European Union a more prosperous, cohesive, and inclusive place for society. However, notwithstanding the efforts made, third-country nationals continue to fare worse than domestic citizens in terms of employment, education, and social inclusion outcomes. The article examines and subsequently reviews various trends in integrating foreigners (primarily third-countries nationals and asylum seekers) on social and economic level after the outbreak of migrant and refugee crisis in 2015 until the present day. Our research suggests that the concerned group of immigrants continue to face barriers in the education system, on the labour market, and in accessing decent housing and adequate health care. All of the aforementioned aspects have become the main focus of all parties involved. Through funding, initiatives, and specific measures undertaken by both the EU and Member States with NGOs strengthen and support integration across key policy areas, albeit deficiencies are still observed.*

***Keywords:** migration crisis, European Union, integration policy*

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## 1 Introduction

Migration has long been considered a phenomenon that greatly influences state policies and the composition of population or other demographic aspects. The issue of migration has been a much-discussed topic in the last decade, not only in the world but also at the national or regional level. There are several types of migration, but their clarification is not the subject of this article. The article focuses exclusively on the European area, in particular the Member States of the European Union. The EU and its Member States are working hard to establish an effective, humanitarian and secure migration and asylum policy. Since the outbreak of the so-called migration crisis in 2015, the EU took a plethora of measures that contributed to a better control of migration flows. On the one hand, they focus on legal aspects of migration - the EU has adopted a number of rules in relation to asylum seekers and refugees in need of international legal protection, highly qualified workers, students, researchers or those coming to the EU for family reunification. On the other hand, it also pays attention to other migratory movements. The EU strengthens the protection of the external Schengen border, works to create a common European asylum system and intensifies work to make return policy more effective (European Council, 2021a). Up to the present, despite all efforts, migration is perceived as a threat and is often a source of conflicts that polarize society. To illustrate, migration and issues related to it are perceived most positively in Sweden, Luxembourg and the Netherlands, while most negatively in Bulgaria, Hungary and Slovakia (Drazanova et al., 2020). The beginnings of mistrust and negativity can be traced back to the migration and refugee crisis of 2015, when the European Union reacted too slowly to the situation and its Member States were unable to agree on a Europe-wide solution to the crisis for many months. The atmosphere of 2015 benefited radical populists or far-rightists (Bauerová, 2018), who offered simple solutions such as "stop migration" with their specific language and communication strategies (Štefančík and Hvasta, 2019). A closer inspection of the migration and asylum policies of the EU Member States indicates there are disparities in the development of national and regional approaches in the search for measures forming common EU migration policy. These differences correspond to the specificities of national migration patterns and the number of immigrants from EEC countries and third-country nationals residents (Molodikova, Lyalina and Emelyanova, 2018). To clarify the term third country as it is extensively used in the article, we take a reference from Regulation (EU) 2016/399 (Schengen Borders Code)

which says that a third country is not a member of the European Union as well as a territory whose citizens do not enjoy the European Union right to free movement (EUR-lex, 2016). The successful integration of immigrants is crucial to the welfare, prosperity, and future cohesion of European societies. Although the primary responsibility for integration mostly concerns the Member States, the EU directly assists both national and local authorities using variety of tools, involving policy coordination, knowledge exchange, and financial resources.

In addition, the EU increasingly endeavour to implement a common approach to asylum policy, to conclude border control agreements with migrants' countries of origin, or to develop cooperation programmes on migrant employment and subsequent social inclusion (Carmel, 2012; Geddes, and Scholten, 2013). The fact is that inclusive integration requires the effort of both the individual concerned and the host community. When efforts are insufficient, migration policies at national and international levels are particularly prone to failure (Castles, 2004; Hollifield, Martin and Orrenius, 2014). Integration policies are essential for newcomers, local communities and contribute to cohesive societies and strong economies, which at the same time, is a challenge for governments to effectively regulate migration and protect their citizens (Castles, 2004).

This article, as it is presented, analyses the approach of European countries to migration, integration of foreigners and then examines the key elements of these policies. Due to the scattered and diverse nature of the literature, our intention was to compile a review. In the introduction, the article presents the theoretical framework of the researched issues. Specifically, it is dedicated to the processing and analysis of available sources dealing with the development of migration in the EU since the beginning of the migration crisis in 2015, with emphasis on the specifics of this crisis. Subsequently, we will focus on the specifics of the current EU migration and asylum policy, based on the aspects we have selected. We focus primarily on the social and economic facet as we will deal with housing policy, access to health care, but we will also take into account the factor of formal education and access to the labour market.

## 2 European Union, migrants, and asylum seekers

To date, the European Union is an economic and political union between 27 selected European countries, which works to foster stability, security, prosperity, and democracy, thus making it attractive even for non-EU citizens. The record migration waves that hit the countries of Europe in 2015 and 2016 can be ranked among the largest migration waves in the history of this continent. The influx of immigrants and asylum seekers has highlighted gaps in the European asylum system. EU countries did not count on such high numbers of visitors. The system, therefore, needs to be made more effective and more just for all involved countries (European Parliament, 2017). The EU and its Member States have learned from the crisis year of 2015 and taken steps to slow down immigration to Europe, but the beginning of 2016 was marked by the continuation of mass arrivals through the Mediterranean migration route. The Western Balkan countries therefore closed their borders one by one, which resulted in a humanitarian crisis on Greece's northern borders. The Mediterranean route thus became the primary choice of incoming foreigners.

Taking into account geographical conditions, countries receive most migrants at the beginning of the migration route and then decide whether to bring them in and provide them with a shelter or transfer them to another country. It is natural that a large number of countries refuse to receive migrants from third countries, as they represent a burden to the economy in the form of increased spending. On the other hand, the prevailing view may be that immigrants can contribute to a country's tax system provided that they are employed. However, several empirical studies indicate that the benefits resulting from immigrant tax contributors are relatively small (Rowthorn, 2008; Nowrasteh, 2014).

If an illegal foreigner cannot be legally returned to the country of origin, the Dublin Regulation enjoins countries of the first contact to register and provide immigrants with shelter. However, this principle is seldom respected, as the countries most affected by the migration crisis considered these regulations to be unfair and allowed foreigners to continue in their journey. They continue to the countries of Western, Northern and Central Europe, where the quality of life is higher compared to Southern Europe. This style of migration management has generally been perceived negatively as unfair, and overall increases the costs associated with the immigration of foreigners (Del Ponte et al., 2021). Following the migration crisis and the Dublin Regulation, the overall number of asylum seekers has increased.

The EU does not treat asylum seekers uniformly, and the proportion of positive asylum decisions also varies considerably from country to country. It is up to the national authorities to decide who will be recognized as a refugee and who will be offered protection. The EU, in turn, sets out a number of conditions that Member States must comply within this process. These include adequate reception conditions, the processing time for asylum applications, and guarantees for vulnerable applicants. According to EU rules, countries must allow asylum seekers to start working in the country after six months of residence and guarantee the right to education for minor asylum seekers. As a result, asylum seekers travel around Europe and seek asylum in the countries they believe can offer them a better chance of obtaining international protection (European Council, 2021b).

### **3 Methodology**

Migration policy is currently probably one of the most debated and at the same time most complex policies that a variety of different public policy actors seek to address. To assess the current trends of the EU migration, integration, and asylum policies, we focus on various aspects which present most challenges for the EU to achieve its goal. These mainly include social, political, economic and security trends (Bedrina and Lazareva, 2021; Pipchenko, Makarenko and Ryzhkov, 2019), however, due to the nature of the article, we solely focus on social and economic aspects as the interest of the EU regarding these is very palpable.

The paper will use a descriptive and interpretive approach, which is based on an analysis of existing research as well as descriptive statistics to interpret data prepared in the study. The sources of information cover academic papers, but mainly official documents from the institutions of the European Union, including projects and initiatives organized under the auspices of the European Parliament and the European Commission since 2015 up to the present. The present article does not aim to analyse the policies of individual countries, but rather provides a general overview and current trends across member countries. Specifically, we focused on social and economic trends, which, among other things, deal with steps aimed at improving health care, housing, and the integration of foreigners, whether culturally or economically in the labour market. In addition, we discussed the role of a language as a significant prerequisite of successful integration. We used the synthesis method to draw conclusions and interpret the results.

## 4 Results

A well-managed migration to Europe is good for our societies, culture and economy. The integration and social acceptance of people with a migrant background have a major impact on the cultural exchange and cohesion of communities. At the same time, they help fill the gaps in skills and labour availability and increase economic performance overall. Too many migrants in the EU are struggling with unemployment, lack of education or training opportunities and limited social contacts in wider communities. However, these are all challenges from which appropriate public policies could create opportunities. In 2014, the then President-in-Office of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker, insisted on a stronger EU asylum policy, which should have been in line with its foreign relations with countries that either sent migrants or were viewed as transit countries. In addition, he promised more funding for Frontex. It also committed itself to a more fundamental EU policy on labour migration for third-country nationals (Brady, 2014).

Civil wars in Iraq and Syria, threatening militant movements in Afghanistan and Libya, persistent military operations against the Islamic State, tensions on Kosovo-Serbia border, conflicts in Yemen and Pakistan, or conflicts motivated by religion in Nigeria these are the main causes of the influx of numerous waves of refugees into the EU (Chaplynskyi, Savishchenko and Shevchenko, 2019). In 2015, more than 1 million people came to Europe from military conflict zones and from West African countries. Among the most appealing countries for migrants there were the ones reachable by sea. The following table provides data on the number of asylum applications in EU countries.

**Table 1:** Evolution of number of asylum applications in the European Union

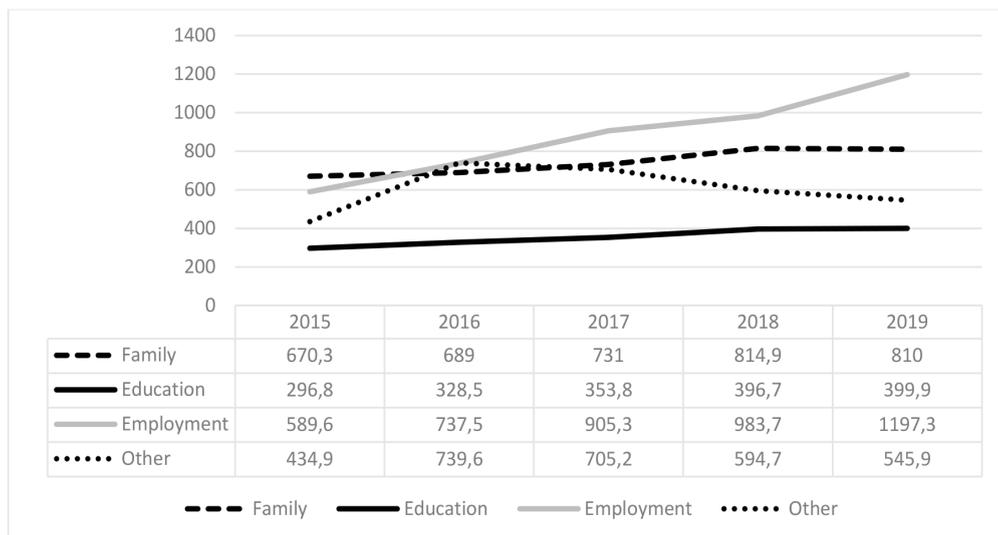
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
<b>Austria</b>	28,035	88,160	42,255	24,715	13,710	12,190
<b>Belgium</b>	22,710	44,660	18,280	18,340	22,530	27,460
<b>Bulgaria</b>	11,080	20,365	19,420	3,695	2,535	2,150
<b>Croatia</b>	450	210	2,225	975	800	1,400
<b>Cyprus</b>	1,745	2,265	2,940	4,600	7,765	13,650
<b>Czechia</b>	1,145	1,515	1,475	1,445	1,690	1,915
<b>Denmark</b>	14,680	20,935	6,180	3,220	3,570	2,695
<b>Estonia</b>	155	230	175	190	95	105

<b>Finland</b>	3,620	32,345	5,605	4,990	4,500	4,520
<b>France</b>	64,310	75,750	84,270	99,330	120,425	128,940
<b>Germany</b>	202,645	476,510	745,155	222,560	184,180	165,615
<b>Greece</b>	9,430	13,205	51,110	58,650	66,965	77,275
<b>Hungary</b>	42,775	177,135	29,430	3,390	670	500
<b>Ireland</b>	1,450	3,275	2,245	2,930	3,670	4,780
<b>Italy</b>	64,625	84,085	122,960	128,850	59,950	43,770
<b>Latvia</b>	375	330	350	355	185	195
<b>Lithuania</b>	440	315	430	495	405	645
<b>Luxembourg</b>	1,150	2,505	2,160	2,430	2,335	2,270
<b>Malta</b>	1,350	1,845	1,930	1,840	2,130	4,090
<b>Netherlands</b>	24,495	44,970	20,945	18,210	24,025	25,195
<b>Poland</b>	8,020	12,190	12,305	5,045	4,110	4,070
<b>Portugal</b>	440	895	1,460	1,750	1,285	1,820
<b>Romania</b>	1,545	1,260	1,880	4,815	2,135	2,590
<b>Slovakia</b>	330	330	145	1,475	175	230
<b>Slovenia</b>	385	275	1,310	160	2,875	3,820
<b>Spain</b>	5,615	14,780	15,755	31,120	54,050	117,795
<b>Sweden</b>	81,180	162,450	28,790	26,325	21,560	26,255
<b>United Kingdom*</b>	32,785	38,800	38,785	33,780	37,730	44,835

Source: European Parliament (2021).

It follows from the Table 1 that the most desired countries include, in particular, Germany, France, Italy and Austria. Greece can also be included in these countries, but this country is a distinctive case, as it presents the gateway to Europe and a significant number of foreigners apply for asylum there. Foreigners from the third, non-EU countries, come to the EU for various reasons. The most common reasons cited by first residence applicants are primarily work and family.

**Graph 1: First residence permits reasons**



**Source:** European Commission, 2020a.

At the end of 2019, out of 2,953.1, most first residence permits in the EU were issued for the following reasons: family (27.43%), work (40.54%), education (13.54%) and other (18.49%); however, the most prevalent reason in 2015 was family. Also, on the basis of these data, it can be argued that one of the most significant facts to consider is that migrants crossing the Mediterranean are not representatives of a single or homogenous group (Hammond, 2015). It thereby requires various policies adjusted to foreigners' needs.

#### 4.1 Social Trends

Within the European environment, there are three approaches to the interaction between indigenous peoples and migrants. Three main perspectives used in social sciences are the theory of assimilation, multiculturalism and segregation (Algan, Bisin and Verdier, 2012). Of the previous models, the assimilation model is the least widespread. Migrants are beginning to adapt to their new country through various models, such as cultural assimilation or acculturation. Socio-economic assimilation subsequently leads to further stages of assimilation, through which ethnic groups gradually lose their cultural characteristics, including religion, language and other values. On the other hand, they accept the cultural patterns of the host country. Such

a model is typical of European countries, especially for France, which was based on the idea of spreading culture to its colonies in the 19th and 20th centuries. As long as French culture and customs were adopted, the original inhabitants of these colonies were considered French citizens. However, this model has become the centre of criticism (Bertaux, 2016). On the contrary, the path the EU wants to take is the model of multiculturalism. It follows from the Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027, according to which it is important to give *“equal opportunities to all to enjoy their rights and participation in community and social life, regardless of the background and in line with the European Pillar of Social Rights. It also means respecting common European values as enshrined in the EU Treaties and in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, including democracy, the rule of law, the freedoms of speech and religion, as well as the rights to equality and non-discrimination”* (European Commission, 2020b). A particular problem is posed by third-country nationals, of which there are currently 23 million in EU countries, representing approximately 5.1% of the total EU population (European Council, 2021c).

In this regard, EU policymakers have set themselves a goal to raise the educational level of the incoming population and thus prepare it for better integration into society. The European Commission provides financial aid to projects and disseminates successful practices in the field of education for migrants and refugees. Among the many initiatives it coordinates, those focusing on language skills and the recognition of qualifications are key. Especially, refugee students require more attention in terms of education and support than most other recently arrived migrant students. For example, in Bulgaria and Greece, between 50% and 62% of all school-age refugee and migrant children were integrated into the formal education system (IOM, 2019). The EU set aside significant funding to support migration and integration policies. The Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) for the 2014-2020 term, with an overall volume of € 3.137 billion, aimed to support the management of migration flows and, among other things, strived to develop and strengthen common EU approach to both asylum and immigration. All EU countries except Denmark are participating in the implementation of measures financed by this fund. The current trend is to support reception centres. A significant part of these funds was allocated to improve the quality of accommodation facilities or to streamline the management of the income of foreigners or refugees (European Commission, 2021a).

Housing is another frequently addressed issue. Access to adequate and affordable housing is a prerequisite for third country nationals to start a life in a new society. On the other hand, immigrants often face higher poverty rates (including among children) and poorer-quality housing than the native-born (OECD, 2018). Housing policy is one of the key policy areas that underpin the successful integration of immigrants in the host country, but this issue has received only little attention in public debate at both EU and national level (Dell’Olio, 2004). Currently, immigrants in the EU generally face discriminatory practices and obstacles reflected, for example, in higher rent (Gusciute, Mühlau and Layte, 2020; Lukes, de Noronha and Finney, 2018). The issue of ensuring adequate housing for third-country nationals is the responsibility of the countries rather than the EU as a whole. Based on AIDA and ECRE (2019) research we claim that the current drawbacks and possible challenges for the future consist in removing barriers stemming from legal and administrative obstacles in domestic legislation and administrative procedures. Ongoing practices of providing adequate housing for migrants and refugees lay in revitalizing depopulated urban areas by renovating vacant houses which are then used as housing. In some countries (e.g. France, Belgium), they find interaction between local communities and refugees very important, thereby developing shared public spaces and conducting activities is considered important to support integration. On the other hand, in Germany and Netherlands cost-efficient houses involving migrants and refugees into construction process are built. Lastly, resources on housing projects, such as modular housing for migrants and refugees, through partnerships between governments, NGOs and the private sector have become very efficient practices ensuring affordable housing for foreigners (UNECE, 2021). To facilitate migrants' access to housing, European Investment Bank and European Commission provide funding to similar projects, yet as it was previously said, there are big differences between EU countries. For this reason, it is complicated to create a universal housing policy that would match immigrants' individual needs. (Psoins and Rosenfeld, 2018).

Nevertheless, housing still presents one of the weightiest challenges together with access to health service. Access to health services for third-country nationals is inevitable to ensure smooth integration. Insufficient access to health and services can affect virtually all areas of life. Many migrants often leave countries of origin due to unsatisfactory health care systems or due to poor access. As we have already highlighted, there are also countries which

have legal barriers, stipulating which types of service an asylum seeker, refugee, or undocumented migrant has the right to access (O'Donnell, 2018). In addition, the growing diversity of languages spoken in Europe poses new challenges for healthcare services, which have to cope with several barriers, both in terms of linguistic and cultural understanding, and there is a lack of interpreters and cultural mediators (MacFarlane et al., 2012; Pithara, Zembylas and Theodorou, 2012; Bradby et al., 2020).

In 2016, the European Commission introduced a set of reforms to the Common European Asylum System, which facilitated legislative processes concerning provisions of common healthcare service. To make healthcare more accessible, the European Commission strives to provide support to countries that suffer from large inflow of migrants. Most migrants are healthy when they join the EU. However, their health may deteriorate while travelling or they may have suffered from certain health problems before coming to the EU. Financial support is therefore allocated to improve healthcare for migrants, integrate them into national healthcare systems and provide training for health professionals. In response to health challenges, the EC supports EU countries facing particularly high levels of migration and promotes the exchange of best practices on healthcare models. Last but not least, the European Commission perceives medical workers unskilled in terms of intercultural communication and expertise as a weakness. Thus, it develops training programmes and materials for medical staff and other professionals working with migrants in order to acquaint them with diseases they do not know and to provide them with information on different cultural perspectives.

One of the many ongoing projects is Common Approach for REfugees and other migrants' health (CARE). CARE project strives to promote access to appropriate health care for all foreigners regardless their origin. Virtually, the support is mostly aimed and later implemented where it is most required – in hotspots and migrants/refugees centres (CARE, 2016). Another initiative that marked success is Joint Action under the Third EU Health Program 2014 – 2020: Joint Action Health Equity Europe (JHAEE), whose object is to bridge the policy practice gaps in order to reduce inequalities in the healthcare of international migrants. The initiative focuses on the socio-economic determinants, including employment, housing or education, which can eventually affect a migrant's health. It discusses and accentuates the critical role of effective and well-timed communication strategies, which promote healthy lifestyle among migrants and guide them on how they can approach

proper medical healthcare services (JHAE, 2019). Based on the ongoing projects it can be articulated that the main trends consist in promoting access to health care, as well as provide medical staff with appropriate training, with a special attention to information exchange.

## 4.2 Economic Trends

Economic integration, especially in the labour market, significantly depends on the economy of a host country and immigrants themselves. In this case, the European Commission seeks to promote the integration of foreigners, but mainly refugees into the labour market. The successful economic integration is not beneficial only for foreigners as they have income, but, on the other hand, it contributes to society and country's economy as well. The Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights, Nicolas Schmit, said: *“The European Pillar of Social Rights makes no distinction where people come from. Regardless of gender, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation, everyone has the right to equal treatment and opportunities regarding employment. Helping refugees integrate into the labour market by upskilling and by accessing quality jobs is paramount for their dignity, and it is paramount for Europe's social cohesion”* (European Commission, 2020c).

The European Commission representatives realised the economic integration was a twofold process, including both immigrant employees and employers, thereby the initiative called *Employers together for integration* was launched to highlight the importance of mutual cooperation of stakeholders at European level. The successful integration of immigrants into the EU labour market is challenging but can be profitable for the country. For example, in Germany, the initiative ensures employment for refugees who consequently take part in activities aimed to increase language proficiency, and bridging programmes under the auspice of the German Federal Employment Agency and the Office of Migration and Refugees (European Commission, 2021b). Nevertheless, foreigners from third countries perform worse on the labour market than EU nationals, despite Article 17 of the Geneva Convention, which states that countries of residence should not prevent refugees from wage earning employment in order to protect their own workforce (Chemin and Nagel, 2020). For instance, in 2018, the average recorded employment rate of third-country nationals in the Member countries was 59.3 %, while among EU nationals, it was 73.9 %. Another common problem is overqualification.

Among highly qualified employees from third countries, more than 40 % work in a position that does not require such a form of education (European Commission, 2021c). The Member States and the European Union as a whole are interested in ensuring that foreigners find employment in positions that match their education attained. This mainly concerns refugees who lack evidence of previous education attainment, may have had their education interrupted for any reason, and/or may not have participated in any form of formal education.

From the previous parts of the article, it follows that for economic as well as social integration we have identified education and language as the main factors. The economic integration of foreigners, whether from EEC or third-country immigrants, is not only about themselves, but also about employers. How does the EU support employers? To provide overall support for education, training and language teaching, the European Commission approved 12 projects in 2017, thus facilitating labour market integration:

- LABOUR INT 2
- ERIAS – European Refugees Integration Action Scheme
- NewTalents4Eu
- ETCC – EMPLOYER TAILORED CHAIN COOPERATION
- MILE – Migrant Integration in the Labour market in Europe
- MIraGE – Migrant Integration for Growth in Europe
- In2C – Integration of Third-Country Nationals in the Construction sector
- LIME – Labour Integration for Migrants Employment
- W4I – EU – Work4Integration – Europe
- E.M.M.E. – Enterprise Meet Migrants for Employment 2017
- IMMIJOBS – Building the Capacity Intermediary Organization to Support the Employment of Third Country Nationals
- BEST – Boosting Entrepreneurial Skills as Tool of integration of migrants to labour market

All these programs and initiatives mainly improve the effective integration of Third Country Nationals, organize training courses, and provide them with job-related language skills and knowledge of national and EU policies in their professional field (European Commission, 2021d).

## 5 Conclusion

European countries including their societies are, and will continue to grow, increasingly heterogenous. In this regard, the EU has been supporting Member States in their integration policies for several years already with a plethora of instruments, such as projects, initiatives and funds. Contrary to expectations, such an effort to implement identical policy in Member States can dash our hopes on successful integration of foreigners. The policy collapse stemming from 2015 migrant and refugee crisis was not entirely owing to incomplete agreements between EU countries but it was also a result of debatable assumptions employed across policy communities and structural constraints imposed on hybrid organizations such as the EU (Scipioni, 2018). We also identify with the previous statement and oppose the idea of uniform migration policy for all countries, as it is very ineffective to apply the very same measures in countries of diverse cultures, societies, economies, and governments. Another pitfall of successful integration is migrant distribution. Generally speaking, what we have learnt from the history, large numbers of refugees and their highly unequal distribution among the Member States pose considerable challenges to the EU (Thielemann, 2005). The issue of migration has paralyzed individual EU Member States in recent years. As the results of the national elections in the EU Member States in recent years show, the failure to address migration issues leads to Euroscepticism, xenophobia, extremism, and nationally oriented political parties (Puškárová and Zickgraf, 2019).

Based on the facts stemming from the paper, it can be argued that the key elements of successful integration that the EU institutions and countries seek to promote include language skills and the acquisition of the country values, as well as participation in the welfare system by paying taxes, which is conditioned by successful integration into the labour market. To secure non-conflict coexistence of different ethnic, cultural and religious groups with the domestic society, it is essential to highlight the importance of intercultural education, which has been established in countries with a tradition of immigration long before the outbreak of the 2015 crisis (Čiefová, 2020).

Our findings also reflect OECD data. Considering the fact that the cost of unsuccessful integration may exceed the cost of investment in integration policies, evidence shows that third-country nationals have a positive fiscal net contribution if they are well integrated in a labour market (OECD, 2013). Perhaps the most important condition for successful integration into a society is language. Dražanová et al. (2020) concluded that the language dimension receives the highest average score in 15 of the 25 countries and the second highest score in the other seven countries, while the need to contribute to the social security system by paying taxes ranks first in eight countries and second in another 15 countries. Immigrants' commitment to the way of life in the destination country by adopting societal values and standards is in the third or higher place in 12 countries and the fourth in another nine countries.

Since the outbreak of the 2015 migration crisis, the European institutions have been trying to take steps to grant equal rights to third-country nationals to equalise them with the domestic population. The governments of individual countries or NGOs, which can detect the most serious problems at the local level and then solve them, cannot be neglected to achieve this goal. Despite all efforts, the reasons for gaps in the integration of non-EU migrants mostly relate to the fact that immigrants lag behind in education, there are language barriers concerning both social and economic spheres, and frequent discrimination. The EU and individual countries must also make labour market integration more effective. Uneven access to employment, decent housing and social services, or mismatching jobs and overqualification in the case of highly educated migrants still present one of the biggest challenges which must be solved promptly, otherwise integration of immigrants will never be successful enough.

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