

Political Issues and Social Policy in the E.U.

Professor John Wilton

Lecture 7

Immigration policy



Additional Sources

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Treaty of Amsterdam, 1997

- called for measures to be introduced by the year 2002 to ensure the absence of any control on persons when crossing internal borders in the E.U.



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By middle of 1990s main sources of
immigrants into E.U. were from
Yugoslavia, Turkey, Algeria, Morocco

- Germany 1,918,000 Turks
930,000 Yugoslavs
- France 614,000 Algerians
573,000 Moroccans
198,000 Turks



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- U.K. 1,281,000 people from non-E.U. countries (included 130,000 Africans and 322,000 from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh)
- Belgium ... 145,000 Moroccans
88,000 Turks



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- Netherlands 203,000 Turks
165,000 Moroccans
- Italy 97,000 Moroccans
73,000 Yugoslavs



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2 different processes, and operating at 2
different speeds:

A) much more convergence and
harmonisation between individual E.U.
States on immigration policy;

B) a much more limited convergence and
harmonisation on citizenship policies



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2 main reasons why migration flows from outside and inside EU into most E.U. countries continue:

- A) Capacity of E.U. states to police their borders effectively and maintain strict controls over immigration is limited;
- B) many E.U. states dependent on migration to meet varying requirements of internally different labour markets



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Schengen Accord, 1990

- France, Germany, Netherlands, (and later) Italy

Treaty of Amsterdam, 1997

- formal integration of Schengen Accord
- E.U. take responsibility border free area (except UK, Denmark, Ireland)



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- up to early 1980s around 100,000 asylum applications each year
- 1992 Over 660,000 asylum applications
- Post May 2004 E.U. enlargement
 - 623,000 Poles
 - 30,600 Czechs
 - 115,000 Slovaks

applied to work in other E.U. states (May 2004
to May 2006)



- *The Stockholm Programme 2010 - 2015*

- The EU's law-and-order agenda - Immigration is a major focus. EU countries urged to adopt a common strategy to better manage their borders and satisfy labour market needs. Called for laws to ensure immigrants had equal rights throughout the EU and for closer monitoring of migration patterns and labour trends.
- Was the first step towards the adoption of a concerted Immigration and Asylum Policy. Cooperation between member states on immigration issues, where their differing priorities will not even allow consensus on the issue of labour migration, is poor.
- The Stockholm Programme was recognised as a necessary, but insufficient framework for future immigration policy planning.

BUT - member states often only take action for short term political gains - and UK & Denmark uninterested in a collaborative migration policy - leaving interim measures the only strategy on the ground. This is exacerbated by economic uncertainty.



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Skills selective immigration policies in E.U. states:

- 1) immigrant-driven policies where points are allocated to individual immigrants on the basis of particular attributes (usually a mixture of education, age and income)
- 2) employer-driven policies where employers sponsor application for admission of a foreign worker



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Immigration crisis 2015/2016: '*Spillover*' - What did the crisis mean for:

- Harmonisation, mutual recognition and convergence in E.U. immigration and asylum policy?
- Welfare provision?
- Quotas?
- Schengen?
- Nationalism?
- The demographic 'time-bomb' in the E.U.?



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Between 1.1.15 and 31.08.15:

people detected on EU borders seeking entry = 350,000 (doesn't include those who passed through unnoticed) (whole of 2014 = 280,000)

34% from Syria, 12% Afghanistan, 12% Eritrea, 5% Somalia, 5% Nigeria.

Most common route was eastern Mediterranean via Turkey (100,000 attempted to cross overland from Balkans.)

(Source: BBC 'Newsnight' 04.09.15)



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Sea crossings: 2010	9,700
2011	70,000
2012	22,500
2013	60,000
2014	219,000
1.1.15 to 29.06.15	137,000

40,000 people arrived in Hungary in July 2015
alone



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In 2014 asylum applications:

Germany 203,000 (prepared to accept 800,000
in 2015)

U.K. 36,000 (prepared to accept 20,000
over next 5 years from
Syria and Middle East
conflict zones)

Sweden 81,000

Italy 65,000

France 63,000

Hungary 43,000

Czech Republic 1,155



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In 2015 the E.U. forced through mandatory refugee quotas on the Member States at the height of the migration crisis through a qualified majority vote.

(Qualified majority voting (QMV) is a mechanism used within the **European Council** and **Council of the EU** to take decisions without the need for unanimity but which go beyond a simple majority of members. There are two forms of qualified majority: Standard and Reinforced.

Standard: - decisions are adopted if at least 55% of member states – meaning 15 out of 27 – representing at least 65% of the EU population, approve.

Reinforced: - at least 72% of member states must approve, representing the same proportion of the EU population. Abstention counts as a vote against.

A standard qualified majority is the ordinary procedure used for most EU legislation

A reinforced qualified majority is used if the Council is acting on proposal that has not come from the **Commission** or **High Representative for Foreign Affairs**, such as when electing key posts like the **European Central Bank** president and **High Representative**)



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- Hungary, Romania, Czech Republic, Slovakia opposed taking in any refugees under the 2015 quota system
- Those countries, along with others, blocked attempts at reform of the refugee/migration quota system in 2016 that was based on mandatory payments by those E.U. states who refused to take in asylum seekers.
- Towards the end of this year (2020) the European Commission announced it was abandoning the idea of mandatory refugee quotas for the Member States – after 4 years of deadlock between the States
- The proposals would allow E.U. Member States to choose whether to accept refugees, or take charge of returning those denied asylum to their home countries



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- The main problem with the latest proposals is that some of the states who are at the ‘frontline’ of receiving immigrants and refugees across the Mediterranean – Italy, Greece and Spain – feel they are the most burdened as they will retain default responsibility for managing migrants and asylum claims.
- Member State governments will become responsible for any migrants they fail to return to their home countries, rather than the E.U. as a whole.



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- NGOs have condemned the proposals, arguing that the E.U. Commission has bowed to pressure from E.U. Member State governments whose only objective is to decrease the number of people (migrants and refugees) granted protection in Europe.
- In 2018 around 150,000 irregular migrants arrived in the E.U. Member States, the lowest level in five years.
- However, as one German government Minister pointed out with the publication of the latest 2020 proposals, “there is currently no functioning European (E.U.) migration policy.” Undoubtedly, and unfortunately, this is for political and nationalist reasons amongst some of the Member States’ politicians.

