

# THE MODIFICATIONS OF THE MIGRATION DETERMINED BY THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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*The emergence of the pandemic has fundamentally changed global human mobility. Until the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the International Monetary Organization and the International Organization for Migration considered in their studies and reports that migration could bring substantial global benefits to economies in terms of GDP per capita and growth of standard of living. But the key to achieving these benefits was to address the challenges of short-term migration and, in particular, to ensure the integration of migrants into the labor market. The paper aims to discuss the implications of the COVID 19 pandemic on long-term migration after people, health systems and the economy recover.*

**Key words:** migration, economic growth, human capital

**Classification JEL:** J0, J2, J6

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In the last twenty years, the active population in the EU27 has seen a continuous decline, which can be explained by two causes: the aging of the European population due to the increase in the number of retired people, while the number of people falling into this category (years) is declining and declining employment due to the restructuring of many activities under the influence of market demand and ethnic progress.

Employment is, in any society, one of the essential conditions for ensuring macroeconomic balance and social and political stability. It is a desideratum of major interest both for the economic agents and for the social partners. It is a dynamic process with a high degree of complexity, being essential for the sustainable development of society, with various implications (economic, psychosocial, educational-cultural, and political). (Sirkeci, 2020)

Migration is a phenomenon that has manifested itself since the beginning of mankind. It has manifested itself with different intensities over time, taking on new forms. Migration is on the rise in many countries, which has led in the long run to the emergence of those multicultural societies. Thus, a significant part of the developed countries have been transformed into diversified, multiethnic societies, and those that have not yet reached this level, have been decisively oriented in this direction. (Borjas, 2020)

According to OECD statistics, there has been a recent increase in the number of foreign workers in developed European countries. Immigrants are generally younger, being distributed in all sectors of the economy: agriculture, construction, tourism, IT services, the hotel sector, catering. In some sectors, the labor force coming from abroad has a higher share than the domestic labor force.

Achieving the free movement of people through the creation of a common market and the gradual harmonization of the economic policies of the EU member states is a priority Community objective. The mention of this principle in the Treaty establishing the European Economic Community indicates the importance attached to it. However,

EU member states face very different situations regarding the phenomenon of migration: different migration history, different level of economic dependence on immigration and, last but not least, different concerns about recent migration trends. .

Given that economic migration contributes directly to the economic and social development of the European Union, this phenomenon is expected to increase and play an increasingly important role in meeting the needs of the European labor market, taking into account demographic decline and aging in the EU. (Gelatt, 2020)

Migration can have important benefits for global economic well-being. When migrant workers move, for example, from a country where there are large surpluses of labor in one sector or another, travel can improve economic conditions in both countries (origin and destination). Thus, both countries can benefit from these trips.

## 2. THE COVID-19 DISRUPTIONS ON THE MIGRATION

In the current global situation where Humanity is affected by COVID-19, people who travel to and from work on a regular basis may not be able to do so in the future.

This situation will have family, economic and potential food security implications. Migrant workers currently abroad may not be able to get home, and families already facing complicated immigration and visa regimes may experience prolonged separation for a whole new reason. (Kluge, 2020)

If migrant workers working in agricultural fields can no longer travel, these restrictions will be associated with large disruptions to the global food supply chain that will have a long-term impact on global food security. (Pécoud, 2020)

Thus, prolonged migration disruptions will be able to reorient agricultural production and value chains to the detriment of food security, especially in developing countries.

In most industries, the inevitable unemployment related to COVID-19 will undoubtedly target migrant workers, many of whom have temporary visas.

The inability of the workforce to move efficiently - or not at all - will have an impact on future global output, while migrant families will be under greater financial stress. Regarding global inequality, it is likely to increase in the medium and long term, in part due to the lasting impact of migration and the pandemic. If the labor force

of migrants abroad is significantly disrupted by the economic shocks due to the COVID -19 pandemic, these sources of income for families in the developing world will have an impact, creating ripple effects in their economies and, in turn, widening the difference between richer and poorer countries. (Guadagno, 2020)

As in many other crises, migrants may be particularly vulnerable to the direct and indirect impacts of COVID-19. Their ability to avoid the infection, receive adequate health care and cope with the economic, social and psychological impacts of the pandemic can be affected by a variety of factors, including: their living and working conditions, lack of consideration of their cultural and linguistic diversity in service provision, xenophobia, their limited local knowledge and networks, and their access to rights and level of inclusion in host communities, often related to their migration status (Liem et al., 2020). Ensuring that all groups of migrants, regardless of their status, have access to health care is a necessary condition for effective responses to the COVID-19 outbreak (WHO Europe, 2020). Many countries were either providing universal health coverage before the start of the pandemic or have removed obstacles hindering migrants' access to COVID-19 testing and treatment since then.

Regarding the data about migrants, European Commission has released a report on 29 January 2021, where it was mentioned that in the first 10 months of 2020, 390,000 asylum applications (including 349,000 first time applications) were lodged in the EU, 33% less than in the same period of 2019. Member States reduced their backlogs of pending asylum cases. At the end of October 2020, the number of pending cases was 786,000, 15% less than at the end of 2019. This still means that on the EU level, the backlog represents more than a year's worth of new applications – with significant variations between Member States. The recognition rate, or the percentage of asylum applications that resulted in a positive decision at first instance (before any appeals), including decisions granting humanitarian status, stood at 43%. (EC, 2021)

A 10% decrease in the number of irregular border crossings to the EU (114,300 in the period January–November 2020) was observed compared to the same period in 2019, the lowest level in the last 6 years. While there was a significant decrease in irregular arrivals in countries of first entry along the Eastern Mediterranean (-74%, 19,300), the decrease was predominantly due to low arrivals from Turkey to Greece, where the situation is likely to change

depending on different factors including political and economic developments in Turkey. (EC, 2021)

Despite overall reductions, irregular arrivals via the Central Mediterranean (to Italy and Malta) increased (+154%) compared to the same period in 2019. There were over 34,100 such arrivals in 2020, compared to almost 11,500 in 2019, with the majority of people arriving in Lampedusa. With the exception of the month of March, arrivals consistently exceeded 2019 levels. (EC, 2021)

The arrivals in Spain (in particular the Canary Islands) were significantly increased (+46%, 35,800) in 2020 compared to 2019. In Spain, the impact of COVID-19 restrictions on irregular arrivals was temporary: since August 2020, the number of arrivals to Spain was consistently greater than in 2019. In both cases, many new arrivals originate from countries suffering from the economic downturn rather than conflict. A decline in global remittances is also likely to contribute to this trend. Until the pandemic is contained and economic recovery is underway, poor prospects of employment and healthcare in countries of origin will remain an incentive for people to come to the EU. Crossing the Mediterranean Sea remains dangerous. Despite

decreased departures in 2020, 1,754 persons were reported dead or missing compared to 2,095 persons in 2019. (EC, 2021)

The number of asylum applications in the first quarter of 2020 has remained on the level of the same period in 2019 and has significantly decreased since then. In April 2020, there was a big huge drop in the overall number of applications for international protection lodged in the EU Member States, continuing the decline which began in March. The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and the respective emergency measures introduced by the EU Member States, including the suspension of applications' registration, had an impact on the inflow of applications.

The pandemic has also affected employment and migrants' integration as closures and social distancing measures have made an impact on administrative procedures for obtaining residence and work permits, language acquisition, and integration programmes (CE, 2020). At the same time, European countries are implementing some good practices that support migrants across various integration areas (Council Europe, 2020).

The pandemic has highlighted the role that migrant workers play in Europe's coronavirus response;

according to study by the European Commission's Joint Research Centre, 13 per cent of key workers are immigrants, and in most countries, the share of Extra-EU key workers is larger than the EU-mobile one (JRC, 2020).

### 3. CONCLUSIONS

The global COVID-19 pandemic has brought more means to normal economic migration than in previous years. Thus this pandemic brought a combination of factors: unusual economic implications, global inequalities, political and health conflicts that produce in the long run much vulnerable to migrant populations and increasing controllable migration.

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