



Current Migration Trends and New Possibilities of Illegal Migration Prevention

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Abstract

This study investigates current migration patterns and proposes possible new approaches to deter unauthorized migration. The study seeks to identify significant challenges and opportunities in tackling the complexities of unauthorized movements through an examination of current patterns. This paper examines novel methodologies and prospective resolutions, elucidating the ways in which these enhanced prospects may augment the efficacy and sustainability of anti-illegal migration measures.

Keywords: Illegal Migration; Legal Migration; Population Changes; Current Trends

JEL classification: F22, O15

1. Introduction

The primary goals of the research are to delineate the current state and emerging trends in illegal migration to the European Union as of 2022 and 2023, as well as explore novel possibilities for preventing it. To achieve this, the methodology involves the examination and analysis of sources and official reports.

Numerous compelling factors render the subject matter of contemporary migration trends and emerging strategies to avert unauthorized migration critical. This topic remains highly important in the international dialogue as of the end of year 2023 due to the subsequent pivotal factors.

Firstly, migration, whether lawful or unlawful, frequently involves susceptible communities in search of improved standards of living, security, and economic prospects, thereby giving rise to humanitarian considerations. To protect the rights and well-being of individuals, especially those who are compelled to migrate as a result of economic hardship, persecution, or conflict, it is vital to comprehend and resolve the root causes of migration.

Both legal and illegal migration can present threats to the security of nations on a global scale. Terrorism, drug smuggling, and human trafficking are examples of transnational offenses that may be associated with it.

Political and economic implications of migration are significant for the countries of origin and destination. Policymakers can acquire knowledge regarding labour market dynamics, demographic shifts, and the broader economic aspects of migration through an examination of contemporary migration patterns. In the terms of policy development and reforms, an ongoing demand arises for policies that are both adaptable and efficacious.

The significance of migration is underscored by numerous dimensions, including but not limited to social integration of immigrants into societies and communities, human rights, and global collaboration. Consequently, it becomes crucial to resolve both lawful and unauthorized migration for nations developments.

Illegal Migration is also tightly connected to criminal gangs' activities, human trafficking, human exploitation (e.g., prostitution, illegal forced work, forced marriage etc.), people oppression, and such as negative aspects. Said this, human trafficking which include illegal migration, is one of the biggest challenges and threats of Current World that need to be addressed and fight against by all possible means.

2. Literature Review

Human migration has been a persistent and unchanging element across the annals of human history, and it continues to be a paramount and pressing issue on a global scale in the present day. The process of traversing international boundaries brings about a change in the legal standing of individuals, bestowing upon them the designation or standing of migrants (Tataru, 2020).

As Tataru (2020) further explains, the concept of migration as a whole represents a dynamic and perpetually changing reality. Ever since its inception, migration has been an ongoing global phenomenon, exhibiting a range of benefits and drawbacks. Undoubtedly, it is a fundamental component of the present era, wielding a considerable impact on the socioeconomic structure of countries. In light of this indisputable fact, it is imperative that governments across the globe proactively pursue the most effective methods of intergovernmental collaboration with respect to migration (Tataru, 2020).

Kara (2023) states that particular emphasis should be placed on circumstances that exhibit a progressive initiation, wherein the degradation of means of subsistence leads to increased pressures on migration. When there are no available legal channels for immigration, those who are impacted by environmental hazards and climate change and are unable to sustain their means of subsistence may be compelled to engage in irregular migration. Countries generally designate admission policies in accordance with national interests, excluding refugee and asylum policies. This entails prioritizing individuals who contribute to economic growth, address labor shortages, or possess strong familial ties in the destination country (Kara, 2023).

2.1 Legal and Illegal Migrants

Legal Migrant (or Expat) is who enters the country in a legal way, stays in the country in a legal way, and may be also working legally. For example, legal migration is defined by Authorities of the Czech Republic (Ministerstvo Vnitra České Republiky, 2023) as “the process of managed, state-controlled immigration, in the case of the Czech Republic it is regulated by visa practices and residence permits. Legal migration is generally associated with labour migration, through regulated admission of foreigners, satisfies the needs of the domestic labour market. Countries generally can control, within the limits of laws labour migration on its territory, including the establishment of national quotas. Other types of legal migration may include, for example, migration for the purpose of study or family reunification.” (Ministerstvo Vnitra České Republiky).

Irregular Migrant (or Illegal Migrant) is according to the European Union (2023) in a global context, an individual who lacks legal status in a transit or host country due to irregular entry, violation of a condition of entry, or the expiration of their legal basis for entry and residence (European Union, 2023).

Furthermore, as author Hrabálek (2014, pp. 55-57) describes in his book focused on illegal and legal migration to the European Union, illegal migration can be divided into following categories:

- Legal Migrant who enters the country in on legal terms (e.g., with valid tourist visa), but chooses to for instance work in the destination country which is violation and such an migrant becomes illegal migrant.
- Legal Migrant who enters the country (or territory) legally but the legal stay becomes illegal stay due to various reason – for instance the migrant exceeds the visa (stay permit) validity.
- Migrant who entered the country illegally and is also working illegally
- Migrant who entered the country in an illegal way and thus stays there illegally (but is not working).
- Migrant who entered country illegally, but the stay becomes legal (e.g., by marriage with the country citizen), but is working illegally.

As argued by other authors, e.g. Frumusachi (2023), confronting the socially perilous phenomenon of illegal migration necessitates more than mere collaboration among authorities involved in this matter. Additionally, it encompasses the development and execution of policies that ensure the appropriate criminal responsibility of those implicated in detrimental behaviour linked to the unauthorized transportation of migrants. It is crucial that these measures strictly adhere to an effective legal framework at the national, regional, and international levels (Frumusachi, 2023).

2.2 Current Illegal Migration Routes to the European Union

The Frontex (2023) of the European Union shows currently following routes of migration (countries of origins of illegal immigrants):

1. Eastern Land Borders e.g., illegal immigrants from Ukraine (e.g., due to War) or Belarus,
2. Western Balkan Route e.g., illegal immigrants from Türkiye, Syria, Afghanistan, and Bangladesh,
3. Eastern Mediterranean, e.g., via Egypt, illegal immigrants from Afghanistan, Palestine and such as,
4. Central Mediterranean, e.g., immigrants from Guinea, and Tunisia
5. Western Mediterranean, e.g., illegal immigrants from Morocco,
6. Western Africa, e.g., illegal immigrants from Senegal or Morocco,
7. The Channel Route, e.g., via the U.K. – in this route more than 50 nationalities of illegal migrants have been found.

In 2022, Frontex (2023) reports a noteworthy decrease of approximately one-fifth in migratory pressure along the Western Mediterranean route compared to the previous year, even though Northwest African countries contribute to 80% of irregular migrants. However, specific Sub-Saharan African nationalities and Syrians witnessed significant increases. The Western African Route connecting Western Africa to the Spanish Canary Islands experienced a 31% decrease in arrivals in 2022, totalling 15,460 individuals, with over two-thirds originating from Morocco and various sub-Saharan nations (Frontex, 2023).

Frontex (2023) also states that the Mediterranean Sea segment, a crucial migratory pathway to Europe, saw a decline in arrivals since the peak years of 2014-2016, yet recorded over 100,000 detections in the Central Mediterranean in 2022, with Egyptians, Tunisians, and Bangladeshis as the top three nationalities. The Western Balkan route, a major pathway into Europe, witnessed a resurgence in activity with 145,600 irregular border crossings in 2022, a 136% increase from 2021, and Syrians, Afghans, and Turks being the leading nationalities (Frontex, 2023).

According to the data of Frontex (2023), the Eastern Mediterranean route documented about 42,800 unauthorized border incursions in 2022, with Syrians, Afghans, and Nigerians as the top nationalities. Irregular migration along the land border involving eastern EU Member States, Belarus, Moldova, Ukraine, and the Russian Federation was limited but posed significant challenges for border control, especially after an unprecedented influx in 2021. Lastly, the migratory route from continental Europe to the United Kingdom saw increased activity post-Brexit, with 71,000 unauthorized border crossings identified in 2022, involving over 50 nationalities (Frontex, 2023), predominantly from the Middle East, Albania, and the Horn of Africa.

The following summative Figure (no.1) shows current illegal migration routes as of 2022 and 2023.

Figure 1: Illegal Immigration to the European Union and the main Routes as of 2022, and 2023.



Note on Illegal Migration Routes to European Union: 1 – Eastern Land Border, 2 – Western Balkan Route, 3 – Eastern Mediterranean, 4 – Central Mediterranean, 5 – Western Mediterranean, 6 – Western African, 7 – The Channel Route

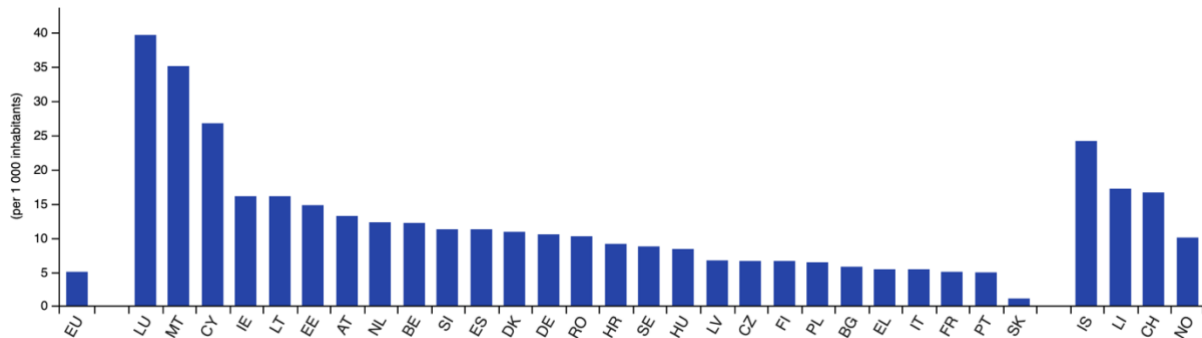
Source: Authors based on Frontex (2023)

In 2022, a total of 1.08 million non-EU citizens were identified to have stayed in the EU illegally, marking a notable increase of 59% when compared to the figures recorded in 2021, which amounted to 679,730 individuals. However, many illegal immigrants are not discovered yet therefore it is assumable that the number of illegal immigrants in the EU is much higher (Eurostat, 2023a).

2.3 Current state of Legal Migration to the European Union

On the other side, there was around 23.8 million people (5.3% of total EU population) that are considered as legal migrants. The highest proportion of legal migrants (non-EU) to the population (EU) is in Luxembourg, Malta, Cyprus, Ireland, and Lithuania. The EU average proportion is 5 non-EU legal migrants on 1 000 citizens. The following figure shows the summative data for whole EU (Eurostat, 2023b).

Figure 2: Proportion of legal non-EU migrants to the total citizens (legal non-EU migrants: total country citizens).



Source: Eurostat, 2023b.

As Foundation for European Progressive Studies (2022) further states to provide a comprehensive understanding of the proposed measures, it is advantageous to analyse the wider context of the European Union (EU) and the obligations of member states with regard to legal migration policy. The European Union primarily determines procedural standards, specific migrant rights, and the comprehensive legal framework governing lawful immigration. This framework includes elements such as education, employment, and family reunification. Individual member states retain the authority to determine the number of third-country citizens they permit to enter their labour markets, thereby affecting the family reunification eligibility of immigrants (Foundation for European Progressive Studies, 2022).

As of legal migration, people from non-EU countries come to the European Union for various reasons. The reasons for stay in the EU is as of following (based on legal residence permits) as of European Commission (2023):

- Family reunion, or family relocation – 35 %,
- Work – 20 %,
- Asylum – 15 %,
- Education – 4 %,
- Other reasons for legal stay permit within the EU – 26 %.

As of employment of legal non-EU migrants to the European Union, the following categories are represented: Accommodation and food service activities – 11,3 %, Administrative and support service activities – 7,3 %, Domestic Work – 5,9 %, Constructions – 9,1 %, and other types of work – 66,1 % (European Commission, 2023).

3. Methodology

The primary goals of the research are to delineate the current state and emerging trends in illegal migration to the European Union as of 2022 and 2023, as well as explore novel possibilities for preventing it. To achieve this, the methodology involves the examination and analysis of sources and official reports.

The methodology involved following steps of Literature Review, Sources Identification, Sources Classification, Data Collection, Data Organisation, and Synthesis and Report Writing.

During the preliminary stage, a thorough examination of the literature was undertaken to gain a comprehensive understanding of the current state of knowledge concerning unauthorized migration to the European Union.

After conducting a comprehensive evaluation of the relevant literature, a range of sources was identified in order to obtain a balanced perspective on the topic. A comprehensive range of sources was utilized, including scholarly articles, reports, publications from international organizations. This approach ensured comprehension of the intricate nature of unauthorized migration to the European Union. A systematic classification was applied to identified sources, taking into consideration their credibility, relevance, and the type of information they furnished.

After compiling an extensive compilation of sources, authors commenced the collection of relevant data, which comprised statistical figures, case studies, and qualitative perspectives. During this phase, essential discoveries, noteworthy patterns, and critical data points were extracted from the chosen sources in order to establish a framework for subsequent analysis.

After the data had been systematically arranged, the research team conducted a thorough synthesis of the results, establishing correlations among diverse pieces of information in order to reveal overarching patterns and themes. The final product of this synthesis served as the foundation for the writing of a report in which significant findings, obstacles, and possible resolutions were expressed.

4. New Trends in Illegal Migration and New Possibilities in Illegal Migration Prevention (Results)

In this chapter, we present the results of our research efforts, delving into the tapestry of findings that has emerged from our exploration of new trends and new possibilities in the prevention of illegal migration.

New Trends in Illegal Migration

Transit Countries: New patterns of illegal migration include, for example, the utilization of countries that are referred to as transit nations by illegal migrants in order to enter the European Union (or to further continue within the European Union to the place of

destination). Nations such as the Czech Republic and the Central Europe region, which serves as a transit region for illegal immigrants to further continue to the countries such as Germany, France, Spain, and others, are examples of countries that fall into this category as mentioned Horáková (2000, pp. 23).

New modus Operandi: There is also new pattern in the use of new modus operandi of human trafficking criminal gangs and illegal migrants as described by SELEC (2019) on the example of Greece. Given the measures taken by the Greek authorities and the closure of the Balkan Route, migrants attempt to travel to Central and Northern Europe by plane, with the use of fraudulent travel documents. In some cases, they attempt to exit the country from smaller peripheral airports. As a result of the high demand for forged travel documents, the number of illegal print shops has risen, especially in Athens. Apart from that, forged or stolen travel documents are been sent to Athens from Albania or other European countries in order to facilitate migrant smuggling (SELEC, 2019).

Illegal Immigrants Profiles: In recent years, the surveys showed that most of illegal immigrants are single males between 20 and 45 years old. Illegal immigration of families (with young children) is less than 5% of all illegal immigrants. That means more than 95% of all illegal immigrants are not families but rather single people, and in most cases single males who are maximum 45 years old (Salt, 2005, pp. 32-35).

New Possibilities in Illegal Migration Prevention

Based on literature review, sources and data collection and categorisation, the not-so-common possible trends to fight illegal migration are proposed:

- It is necessary to solve the core problem on why illegal migration happens in the first place; that involves solving social, economic, human, religious, or any other problems in the countries of origin (of illegal migrants to the EU); that includes for instance solving poverty, exploitation, or similar problems in for instance Afghanistan, or Bangladesh. By doing so potential illegal immigrants will not have any reason for illegal migration to the EU.
- It is necessary to fight against human trafficking rings which involves criminal gangs and individuals who take part in illegal migration organisation and process; such as individuals and gangs should be punished by most serve punishment.
- Implementation of so-called „Smart Border Technologies“ which include (but are not limited) to e.g., biometric identifications, using of AI, and contribute to the automatization and security processes (see also the “AI section”).
- Extending Humanitarian visa and temporary work programs, however this may backfire with, on the other hand more illegal immigrants coming to the European Union.
- To further enhance international collaboration with government of countries of illegal immigrants’ origin.
- To fight against illegal migration – especially against socio-economics problems involved in illegal migration there may be employed non-government organisations (NGOs) which operate in virtual scheme (on-line), e.g.: NGOs which educate people, or NGOs that fight against social dangerous phenomena such as

human trafficking, or explanation as implied and further investigated by for instance Vrba (2023); such an on-line scheme may help with efficiency and range of help provided to the potential illegal immigrants.

- Using AI (Artificial Intelligence) for enhanced security, and other purposes:
 - Predictive Border Control Analysis, and Real-time Border Analysis,
 - Biometric Data Identification such as facial recognition, or retina, and recognition,
 - Social Media Monitoring and Analysis, and avoiding illegal migration connected to terrorism and such as,
 - Big Data Analysis, and Risks Assessment,
 - Virtual Border Agenda and supplementary services.

Enhanced systems of protection and illegal migration prevention can be employed especially by e.g., Virtual Border and use of AI (Artificial Intelligence). First attempts for non-expert virtual borders agenda have been already performed by e.g., Spurte, Tonnies, and König (2018) with positive results using robots-operated tasks and human-robots interface. However, it is important to note that using Virtual Border Systems and AI can also lead to the challenges such as ethical concerns.

Authors of this research paper also believe that this is a good way of border control and illegal migration (and human trafficking) prevention.

5. Conclusion

To gain a comprehensive understanding of the complex terrain of modern migration, our research has shed light on specific facets pertaining to both lawful and unauthorized migration to the European Union. The ramifications of migration, regardless of whether it is authorized or unauthorized, transcend mere demographic changes; they also affect humanitarian affairs, international security, and economic dynamics.

As of the conclusion of 2023, the imperative to tackle the underlying factors driving migration continues to dominate the global dialogue. Given the enduring nature of economic adversities, conflicts, and persecution, it is imperative that we seek resolutions that extend beyond the realm of border control. By comprehending and resolving the fundamental causes that motivate migration, we can establish a pathway towards a more sustainable and humane reaction to population movements.

Irregular migration gives rise to the risk of transnational criminal activities, which underscores the imperative for international cooperation. Ensuring the integrity of legal frameworks, bolstering alliances, and facilitating the exchange of intelligence are recognized as crucial measures in bolstering worldwide security.

Our forthcoming research introduces novel prospects for the prevention of unauthorized migration. The amalgamation of results indicates that technology, specifically artificial intelligence, plays a crucial role in enhancing border control. Intelligent border technologies, biometric identification systems, and predictive analytics are all potentially effective instruments for bolstering security protocols.



Furthermore, it is imperative to acknowledge and confront the interdependence between migration and socioeconomic determinants. Legitimate alternatives and community-centric initiatives, in addition to collaboration with non-governmental and governmental organizations and humanitarian visas, are suggested as potential strategies to tackle the underlying issues.

An emerging domain of study and research is the integration of artificial intelligence (AI), big data analytics, and virtual borders. Its objective is to strengthen measures in the fight against unauthorized migration. In recent times, there has been an increased focus on the investigation of novel technologies and approaches aimed at enhancing border security measures and reducing unauthorized movement.

By incorporating advanced surveillance systems, geospatial technologies, and AI algorithms, Virtual Borders are effectively integrated, presenting a dynamic strategy to tackle the complexities associated with unauthorized migration. AI makes a valuable contribution by utilizing machine learning to identify patterns that are suggestive of unauthorized border crossings via anomaly detection.

Additionally, the integration of big data collection and analysis facilitates the ability of authorities to extract practical insights, thereby allowing for proactive strategies and thorough surveillance. By employing a comprehensive strategy, this approach has the capacity to greatly improve border control by offering a technologically advanced and proactive framework to tackle the challenges posed by modern illegal migration.

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