MIGRATION DETERMINANTS IN THE EU MEMBER STATES

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Abstract: The current study aims to analyse the immigration and emigration determinants in the EU member states. Following the EU enlargements that took place from 2004 to 2013, there was a considerable shift in migration flows in the member states. Analysing and a better understanding the factors underlying emigration and immigration flows in the donor and recipient countries can lead to better prediction and migration management. The results show that the primary pull factors leading to immigration in EU member states are political stability, a high-income level, better economic opportunities, and a higher standard of living. On the other hand, the main push factors leading to emigration from some EU member states are low welfare levels, higher unemployment, low income and wages, and a high level of corruption.

Keywords: immigration, emigration, economic factors, EU.

Introduction

Migration has been a concern for policymakers for several decades. The academic society distinguishes two main types of migrants: people escaping from political pressure and people escaping to make a better living (Apostolova, 2016). Following this classification, we can assume that there are two major groups of migration determinants (Winter, 2020): political determinants (De Haas et al., 2019; Agadjanian & Gorina, 2019; Etling et al., 2020) and economic determinants (Cimpoeru, 2020; Arif, 2020; Sucharita, 2020; Lami et al., 2022; Privara 2022a, 2022b).

During the recent decade, migration gained even more importance in the European Union (EU) due to the recent migration and refugee crises that occurred in 2015, when more than 1.3 million refugees requested asylum in the EU member states; moreover, at the end of 2016 their number reached to over 5 million (Eurostat, 2022), and in 2022 due to the conflict escalation between Russia and Ukraine. Although the main reason for fleeing their country of origin has been political, the media and academic society speculated about these migrants being "refugees" or "economic migrants" in reality (Tétényi et al. 2018; Privara, 2021). Ever since the refugee crisis in 2015, the EU member states that were affected the most (Germany, France, Spain, Italy) started revisiting their attitudes towards migration and migration policy, with most of them reviewing migration governance (Talani, 2020; Rijavec & Pevcin, 2021; Welfens, 2022).

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Among the political reasons leading to immigration, we can distinguish political stability (Kausar et al., 2019; Giménez-Gómez et al., 2019), better political liberties (Hoey, 2018; Lenard & Macdonald, 2021), the absence of violence and terrorism (Winter, 2020; Nusrat & Yasmin, 2022; Sirkeci et al., 2018) in the destination country. On the other hand, the lack of the latter can lead to emigration from the country of origin. The main economic factors leading to emigration are high level of corruption (Crisan et al., 2019; Nusrat & Yasmin, 2022), low levels of income and wages (Laskienė et al., 2020; Shamsuddin et al., 2022), high level of unemployment (Klič et al., 2019; Bijwaard & Wahba, 2022; Durana et al., 2021), low level of welfare (Andrejuk et al., 2021). On the other hand, the primary pull factors making the country more attractive for immigration are a high standard of living (Andrejuk et al., 2021), an attractive migration and integration policy (Winter, 2020), a high-income level (Shamsuddin et al., 2022), economic liberty and better economic opportunities (Kato, 2019) in the destination country.

**Migration in EU countries**

During the past ten years, the European Union experienced intensive migration flows. From 2011 to 2020, the overall immigration numbers reached over 34 million, while emigration numbers reached over 23 million. In the framework of the current study, we have examined the link between the unemployment rate and income level (GDP per capita, PPP) with the migration flows in the EU member states. We have considered the cumulative immigration and cumulative emigration flows from 2011 to 2020 in relation to the population levels as of January 1, 2011. Figures 1 and 2 show the interrelationship between immigration and emigration flows and GDP per capita at the PPP level. The graphs show that while there is a strong positive relationship between income level and immigration, the relationship between income level and emigration is ambiguous, with a slight negative connection.
It is in line with the literature review results, showing that high-income levels and better economic opportunities in some EU member states are strong pull factors leading to high immigration flows.

The following migration determinant analysed in the framework of the current study is the unemployment rate. The relationship between immigration, emigration and unemployment is presented in Figures 3 and 4. The analysis shows a robust negative relationship between unemployment and immigration flows. At the same time, the relationship between unemployment and emigration flows has a robust positive nature.
The results on the relationship between unemployment and migration flow in the EU member states are in line with the literature review results.

**Conclusion**

The study revealed the following pull factors attracting immigration flows to the host countries: political stability, better political liberties, high-income level, better
economic opportunities, and higher standard of living. On the other hand, the push factors triggering emigration flows are political pressures, low welfare levels, higher unemployment, low income and wages, and a high level of corruption.

The analysis of the relationship between unemployment and migration flows in the EU member states showed a strong positive relationship concerning emigration and a negative one concerning emigration. The income level analysis showed a strong positive impact on the immigration flows in the EU member states.

References


