



Received: 03 January 2022 Accepted: 17 December 2022

DOI number: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.7637528>

## MIGRATION DETERMINANTS IN THE EU MEMBER STATES

Denis Ushakov <sup>1</sup>

**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).

1 Denis Ushakov, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat, University, Bangkok, Thailand

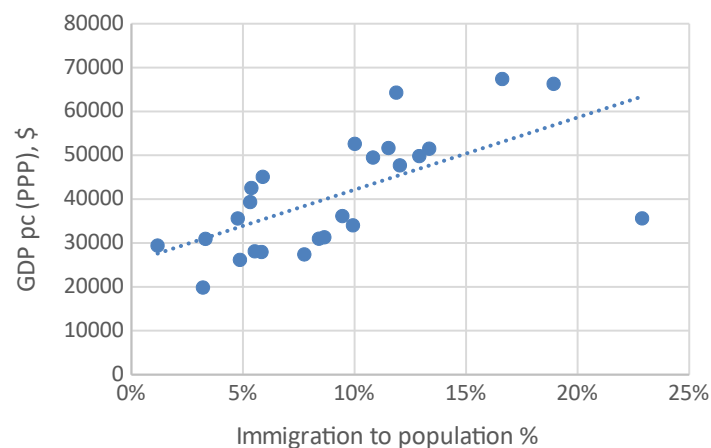
✉ [denis.se@ssru.ac.th](mailto:denis.se@ssru.ac.th)



Among the political reasons leading to immigration, we can distinguish political stability (Kausar et al., 2019; Giménez-Gómez et al., 2019), better political liberties (Hoye, 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 (Kilic 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.

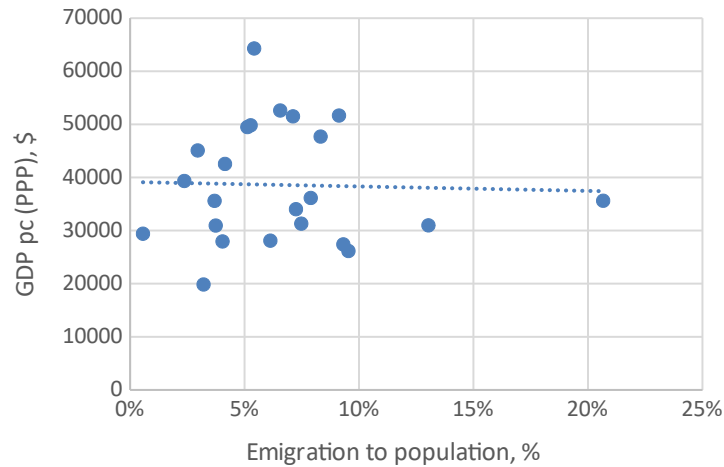
### Migration in EU countries

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.





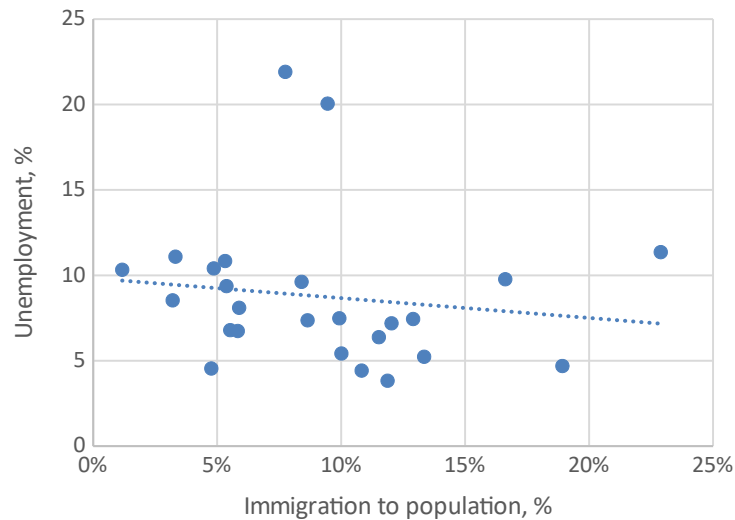
**Figure 1. GDP per capita and immigration in the EU (Made by the author based on Eurostat)**



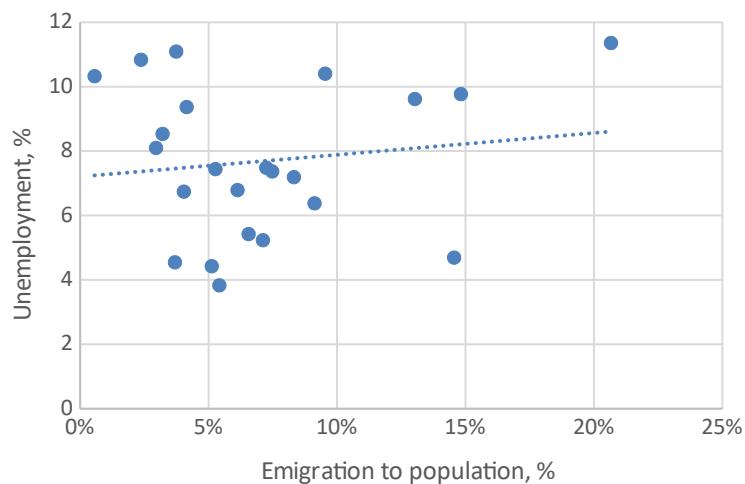
**Figure 2. GDP per capita and emigration in the EU (Made by the author based on Eurostat)**

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.



**Figure 3. Unemployment level and immigration in the EU** (Made by the author based on Eurostat)



**Figure 4. Unemployment level and emigration in the EU** (Made by the author based on Eurostat)

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 immigration. The income level analysis showed a strong positive impact on the immigration flows in the EU member states.

## References

- Agadjanian, V., & Gorina, E. (2019). Economic swings, political instability and migration in Kyrgyzstan. *European Journal of Population*, 35(2), 285-304.
- Andrejuk, K., Godin, M., Jolivet, D., Pereira, S., & Van Mol, C. (2021). Welfare considerations in migration decision-making through a life-course approach: A qualitative study of Spanish EU-movers. *Central and Eastern European Migration Review*, 10(2).
- Apostolova, R. (2016). The real appearance of the economic/political binary: Claiming asylum in Bulgaria. *Intersections*, 2(4), 33–50.
- Arif, I. (2020). The determinants of international migration: Unbundling the role of economic, political and social institutions. *The World Economy*, 43(6), 1699-1729.
- Bijwaard, G. E., & Wahba, J. (2022). Return versus Onward Migration: Go Back or Move On?. *Review of Income and Wealth*.
- Cimpoeru, S. (2020). Macro-Economic Determinants Of Migration. A Comparative Analysis For Old Vs. New European Member States. *Economic Computation & Economic Cybernetics Studies & Research*, 54(4).
- Crisan, E. L., Crisan-Mitra, C., & Dragos, C. (2019). The impact on migration intentions of perceived corruption at the organisational and country level in Romania. *Eastern European Economics*, 57(5), 430-455.
- De Haas, H., Czaika, M., Flahaux, M. L., Mahendra, E., Natter, K., Vezzoli, S., & Villares-Varela, M. (2019). International migration: Trends, determinants, and policy effects. *Population and Development Review*, 45(4), 885-922.
- Durana, P., Michalkova, L., Privara, A., Marousek, J., & Tumpach, M. (2021). Does the life cycle affect earnings management and bankruptcy?. *Oeconomia Copernicana*, 12(2), 425-461.
- Etling, A., Backeberg, L., & Tholen, J. (2020). The political dimension of young people's migration intentions: evidence from the Arab Mediterranean region. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 46(7), 1388-1404.
- Eurostat (2022). Eurostat economic database.
- Giménez-Gómez, J. M., Walle, Y. M., & Zergawu, Y. Z. (2019). Trends in African migration to Europe: Drivers beyond economic motivations. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 63(8), 1797-1831.
- Hoye, J. M. (2018). Migration, membership, and republican liberty. *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy*.
- Kato, M. (2019). Skills mobility and postsecondary education in the ASEAN Economic Community. In *Skilled Labor Mobility and Migration*. Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Kausar, F., Sarwar, S., Rafiq, M. Y., Ali, R., & Rehman, R. U. (2019). Integrating migration, human development and remittances: an analysis of SAARC countries. *International Journal of Happiness and Development*, 5(2), 115-140.



- Kilic, C., Yucesan, M., & Ozekicioglu, H. (2019). Relationship between migration and unemployment: Panel data analysis for selected oecd countries. *Montenegrin Journal of Economics*, 15(3), 101-111.
- Lami, B., Tarasenko, I., Shyshova, O., Voropayeva, T., & Verhun, A. (2022). International Migration of Human Resources in the Conditions of Social Transformations. *Economies*, 10(9), 216.
- Laskienė, D., Zykienė, I., & Verdnikovaitė, P. (2020). Assessment of the impact of income inequality on population's migration. *Inžinerinė ekonomika*, 547-557.
- Lenard, P. T., & Macdonald, T. (2021). Democracy versus security as standards of political legitimacy: the case of national policy on irregular migrant arrivals. *Perspectives on Politics*, 19(2), 371-387.
- Nusrat, M., & Yasmin, B. (2022). Reinforcing Effect of Terrorism and Corruption Nexus on Net Migration from Developing Countries: An Empirical Analysis. *Zagreb International Review of Economics & Business*, 25(2), 65-83.
- Prívar, A. (2021). Labour market efficiency and emigration in Slovakia and EU neighbouring countries. *Economic Research-Ekonomska Istraživanja*, 34(1), 1850-1869.
- Prívar, A. (2022a). Competitiveness of Germany and the Labor Market: A Migration perspective. *Journal of Competitiveness*, 14(2), 116-134.
- Prívar, A. (2022b). Economic growth and labour market in the European Union: lessons from COVID-19. *Oeconomia Copernicana*, 13(2), 355-377.
- Rijavec, D., & Pevcin, P. (2021). The analysis of a public administration crisis situation: The case of migrations in Slovenia. *Management: Journal of Contemporary Management Issues*, 26(Special Issue), 81-99.
- Shamsuddin, M., Katsaiti, M. S., & El Anshasy, A. A. (2022). Income rank and income concerns: What correlates with international migration intentions?. *Economic Analysis and Policy*, 75, 490-505.
- Sirkeci, I., Acik, N., Saunders, B., & Prívar, A. (2018). Barriers for highly qualified A8 immigrants in the UK labour market. *Work, employment and society*, 32(5), 906-924.
- Sucharita, S. (2020). Socio-economic Determinants of Temporary Labour Migration in Western Jharkhand, India. *Millennial Asia*, 11(2), 226-251.
- Talani, L. S. (2020). The 2014/2015 Refugee Crisis in the EU and the Mediterranean Route. *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies*, 22(3), 448-464.
- Tétényi, A., Barczikay, T., & Szent-Iványi, B. (2018). Refugees, not economic migrants: Why do asylumseekers register in Hungary? *International Migration*, 59(1993), 1-18.
- Welfens, N. (2022). Whose (in) security counts in crisis? Selection categories in Germany's humanitarian admission programmes before and after 2015. *International Politics*, 59(3), 505-524.
- Winter, S. (2020). "It's the economy, stupid!": On the relative impact of political and economic determinants on migration. *Population Research and Policy Review*, 39(2), 207-252.