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INTRA-EUROPEAN MOBILITY: PATTERNS OF IMMIGRATION FLOWS AND POLICIES

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INTRODUCTION

For decades, immigration has been at the core of the political and social debate in Europe. In the post-crisis environment, a number of events have inflamed the migration agenda further, making freedom of movement an essential decision point in the planned referendum on European Union (EU) membership in the United Kingdom. At the same time, the humanitarian crisis in the Mediterranean is testing the limits of the EU and of its member states to manage migration in a humane and fair way. Large-scale immigration has long challenged the Westphalian tradition of nation-state sovereignty in Europe (Joppke, 1998). However, these tensions have only increased over the last decade, following conflicts in Europe’s neighbourhood, the fall of the ‘Iron Curtain’ and the eastern enlargement of the EU, or the 2008 global economic and financial crisis.

If until recently the most controversial aspect of immigration has been migrants and asylum seekers from outside the EU and an invisibility of European migration and European migrants, in the last few years we observe that the very principle of migration from the other member states is challenged in a systematic manner for the first time since its proclamation in the Treaty of Rome (establishing the European Economic Community in 1958). The rebellion against the status quo on freedom of movement of people in the EU is led by Western European states. They are the almost exclusive receivers of EU migration, either from the other Western European states, or from the new member states in Central and Western Europe.

This essay traces the transformation of EU migration over the last decade, following the most recent enlargements and the south–north migration which has re-emerged since the financial crisis, and examines the causes of an unprecedented contestation of free movement rights.

BUILDING FREEDOM OF CIRCULATION IN THE EU

Mobility within the EU is the result of the introduction of the freedom of movement for people, a unique migration system unmatched by others that gives broad mobility and residency rights. While most regional integration projects around the world develop human mobility to reinforce their economic objectives, freedom of movement in the EU is the most extensive mobility regime because it concerns all nationals of the member states and legally residing non-EU citizens. Mobility rights within the EU are also matched by a similarly generous rights regime, including access to social rights and voting rights or immigrant integration (Maas, 2007; Barbulescu, 2015).

More specifically, freedom of circulation within the EU was achieved in 1968, with the aim of removing barriers to the functioning of a fully integrated market economy in Europe and enhancing the matching of labour supply and demand. Since then, it has acted as one of the key elements of the EU single market in post-Second World War Europe.

Paradoxically, while freedom of circulation is the EU's achievement to which citizens are most attached, the opening of labour markets to the foreign labour force in existing member countries has been an issue in all subsequent enlargements in the last 35 years (1981, 1986, 2004, 2007 and 2013). Especially, the expansion of the EU to Central and Eastern Europe and the subsequent intensification of flows from new member states to Western Europe in the context of deterioration of economic conditions has given rise to serious concerns regarding the capacity to absorb increasing numbers of nationals from other EU countries. In addition, the economic downturn that severely affected most of the European countries has laid the foundation for the (partial) transformation of mobility patterns within this continent. The deterioration of the socio-economic situation after the economic 'credit crunch' of 2007 has had a particularly strong impact on the southern European countries, which were already positioned in a different stage of the migration cycle and commonly considered as new immigration countries. The economic crisis has triggered the renewed emigration of southern EU nationals seeking better employment opportunities abroad (either in northern member states or outside the EU). Consequently, while the contraction of freedom of movement rights, and the systematic challenge to them, has been triggered by the 2004, 2007 and 2013 eastward enlargements, southern Europeans who chose to move to another member state since the start of the crisis are equally affected by the ongoing changes.

The following section considers the transformation of mobility in Western Europe, and how it affected migration policy changes in receiving countries.

TRANSFORMATION OF MIGRATION FLOWS IN WESTERN EUROPE

With a few exceptions, until the first eastward enlargement in 2004, international mobility within the EU was historically very limited and only a small minority of citizens were mobile and their mobility rarely resulted in permanent relocation (Schwarzwa ¨lder and Thode, 2014). While migration from the majority of EU countries remained minimal in the few decades previous to the global economic crisis, Portugal and Ireland sent thousands of migrants to other EU countries (Baganha et al., 2005; Glynn et al., 2014). In the case of Portugal, a large share of migrants resided in Spain, whereas, in the case of Ireland, migrants went to the UK (Schwarzwa ¨lder and Thode 2014). This general immobility among 'old' EU member state nationals in the pre-crisis period has been traditionally attributed to language and cultural barriers (Bonin et al., 2008).

EU Enlargement and the Transformation of European Mobilities

In 2004 the EU expanded eastward, incorporating eight new member states from Central and Eastern Europe

(the Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia), as well as Malta and Cyprus. In 2004 most of the former 15 EU member states (EU-15) imposed temporary restrictions on the movement of Central and Eastern European workers, with the exception of Sweden, the UK and Ireland. Transitional agreements were gradually lifted by other countries in following years, and only Austria and Germany maintained restrictions for the maximum seven years. In the second round of Eastern enlargement that included Romania and Bulgaria in 2007, only Finland and Sweden decided not to impose temporary restrictions to workers from these new member states, and eight of the EU-15 countries maintained restrictions for the maximum period, which ended in January 2014.

The 2004 EU enlargement initiated a new stage in the contemporary European migration trends, which was subsequently consolidated by the 2007 and 2013 enlargements. Employment opportunities and large earning gaps have been significant driving forces of the intense East–West mobility within Europe in the post-transitional period. However, the gradual opening-up of EU-15 labour markets that followed the enlargements considerably increased the outflows from Central and Eastern Europe. According to the EU Labour Force Survey, the total number of nationals from the new member states (excluding Croatia) residing in the 12 countries which formed the EU before 2004 (EU-12) increased 5.4-fold, from 1.1m. in 2004 to 6.1m. in 2014 (Fihel et al., 2015). This number can be translated into a total net inflow of 5m. people from the new member states. According to estimates by Holland et al. (2011), approximately 75% of post-2004 migration from the 10 new member states of May 2004 (EU-10) can be attributed to the effects of accession. The remaining 25% growth is likely to

[end page 35]

have occurred independently of the enlargement. In the cases of Romania and Bulgaria, over 50% of the flows occurring between 2007 and 2010 can be considered an effect of the enlargement process itself.

The enlargement of the EU to Central and Eastern Europe not only increased East–West flows, but also consolidated two principal migratory routes (see Dhe ´ret et al., 2013). Aggregated data regarding the evolution of the numbers of foreign population based on the EU Labour Force Survey show that the new migrants moving west are not equally distributed among receiving countries. Migrants from the EU-10 moved primarily to north-western EU countries (mainly Germany, Ireland and the UK). On the other hand, the 2007 enlargement reinforced already existent flows from Bulgaria and Romania towards southern EU countries, mainly Italy, Spain and Greece. This process was closely related to the gradual improvement of social and economic conditions in southern Europe during the period preceding the 2008 financial crisis, which constituted, along with weak inflow control and easy access to the shadow economy, an important factor of attraction for foreign workers (Peixoto et al., 2012). Finally, the accession of Central and Eastern European countries triggered intense migration to the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) member states, especially Norway and Iceland.

The Economic Crisis and the Transformation of Migration within Europe The onset of the economic crisis in 2008 substantially changed the conditions for East–West mobility. Although the crisis has affected the EU as a whole, its impact was not equal over time and among EU countries (Kahanec and Zimmermann, 2014). Southern EU member states and Ireland suffered from major and prolonged recessions that deeply affected their labour markets. Other countries such as Germany experienced a short-duration economic decline, followed by a period of dynamic recovery. Several other countries, like Belgium, France or the UK, managed to overcome the initial financial turmoil, but their economic performance and labour market conditions have remained unfavorable for several years.

As shown by Dhe ´ret et al. (2013), the impact of the recent crisis on intra-EU mobility can be divided into two phases. During the first period the economic downturn provoked an overall decline in intra-EU mobility,

which can be considered a short-term response to fewer job opportunities and financial uncertainty (Castles and Vezzoli, 2009). During the second phase migration within the EU restarted as the situations in some countries gradually improved. However, its intensity and composition has been slightly different from those of the mobility observed during the previous period.

Before 2011 the overall net increase in the number of recent EU-10 migrants residing in western and northern EU countries slowed down. In 2011 migration started to intensify again as the situations in some western and northern EU countries improved. However, their intensity is lower when compared to the earlier tendencies (see also Herm and Poulain, 2012). On the other hand, emerging divergences and inequalities in economic performance among EU members resulting from asymmetric economic recovery trajectories implied a shift in mobility patterns of migrants from the 2007 accession countries. The outflow from mainly Romania and Bulgaria has not stopped, but has reoriented towards north-western Europe, as southern Europe is no longer a privileged destination.

Although some southern European countries have started to show early signs of recovery in 2014, the economic crisis in this area is far from being over. According to the EU Labour Force Survey, during the period 2007–13 the unemployment rate increased from 8.4% to 27.5% in Greece, from 6.7% to 12.2% in Italy, from 8.7% to 16.4% in Portugal and from 8.2% to 26.9% in Spain. During this period the sharp rise in youth unemployment became an additional challenge for southern EU countries, particularly Spain and Greece, where, according to European Commission figures, over 55% of the economically active population in the 15–24 age range were without work by 2013. Rising unemployment has been accompanied by a significant decrease in salaries and deterioration of the welfare state provisions resulting from the pressure of EU and international financial institutions for fiscal consolidation (Matsaganis and Leventi, 2014). All in all, the deterioration of the south European labour markets and the generalized perception of deprivation of professional aspirations and life expectations, together with improving economic conditions in north-western EU member states, have laid the foundation for the reopening of the south–north migration route.

The aggregated number of southern EU nationals residing in western and northern Europe was already relatively high at the beginning of the economic crisis (over 2.5m.). However, this population comprised mainly (but not exclusively) migrants who had moved from southern Europe during the post-war period, when the intensively growing economies of northern Europe relied heavily on low-skilled workers from less developed countries to meet the increasing demand for labour force. If we focus on recently arrived migrants, we can see that, consistent with the general trend discussed above, the south–north intra-EU mobility dropped significantly as a result of the decrease in labour demand subsequent to the 2008 financial downturn. Nevertheless, from 2010 onwards the number of newly arrived southern EU residents has been increasing according to the pace of the labour market deterioration.

On the other hand, even if to some extent inaccurate and underestimated, available data show that the overall number of new migrants is relatively small, which may suggest that emigration is not the main strategy of southern Europeans to deal with the economic crisis (Kaczmarczyk and Stanek, 2015; Lafleur and Stanek, forthcoming). (However, Portugal with relatively high rates of migration may constitute an important exception.) This is particularly true if we consider the extent, the duration and the harshness of the crisis in southern EU countries and the total size of their populations. Accordingly, it may be argued that, even though the overall migration from the south to the north of the EU is gaining momentum, it is still far from reaching the levels of post-war period migration. For instance, despite the dramatic contraction of the Greek labour market, the total number of migrants who entered the two main destination countries—Germany and the UK—did not exceed 50,000 in 2013. Similarly, the total number of Spanish nationals of working age (15–65 years) residing in other EU countries increased from 200,000 in 2008 to approximately 300,000 in 2013. This data contrasts clearly with the magnitude of unemployment in Spain that affected almost 4,600,000 by the end of 2012.

The picture changes if we consider the emigration of the foreign-born population, whose massive inflow to southern Europe was the main driver of population growth in the period previous to the crisis. It is well known that migrants are especially vulnerable during an economic crisis, due to their concentration in temporary and less protected occupations, as well as the comparatively higher fragility of their social networks (Martin, 2009; Beets and Willekens, 2009). The available data indicate that returns or re-emigration have become an important strategy to deal with the adverse social and economic situation for an increasing number of migrants in southern Europe (Brusa and Papotti, 2011; Parella and Petroff, 2014; Triandafyllidou, 2014). It is still not clear, however, whether the lower opportunity costs of mobility resulting from the right to free movement is a significant factor enhancing EU nationals' mobility compared with that of third country nationals (Gozna 'lez-Ferrer and Stanek, forthcoming; Herm and Poulain, 2012). However, partial evidence indicates that the economic crisis caused an increase not only to the return migration of new member states' nationals, but also to reemigration towards northern and western EU countries (Holland and Paluchowski, 2013).

MIGRATION POLITICS AND POLICIES IN (POST-)CRISIS WESTERN EUROPE

In addition to their demographic and economic impact, new migration flows triggered by the EU's enlargement eastward and the 2008 economic crisis have had important political consequences. As mentioned above, new migration from the south, however, is not a repetition of the past. The post-Second World War labour-hungry industries have disappeared for the most part and north-western EU member states are no longer explicitly recruiting low-skilled workers from the EU's

[end page 36]

periphery. On the contrary, the 2004 and 2007 enlargements of the EU have demonstrated that older member states are now eager to protect their labour market from the arrival of Central and Eastern European migrants through transitional measures. Such restrictions reflect the changing attitude of European member states towards the principle of free circulation of EU workers. Indeed, while this principle has long been highly cherished by EU citizens (Favell, 2008), it has come under systematic attack in many north-western European member states in the context of the economic crisis.

In early 2013 ministers of four member states—the UK, Germany, Austria and the Netherlands—wrote a joint letter to the European Commission to complain that some of their cities were 'under a considerable strain by certain immigrants from other member states'. They also asked for stricter controls—as well as repatriation and re-entry bans—for EU citizens using their right to circulation. Far-right parties, such as the Front National in France, the UK Independence Party (UKIP) in the UK, and the Dansk Folkeparti (Danish People's Party) in Denmark, were the first to issue warnings on EU migration, even calling for the withdrawal of their countries from the EU as a means of stopping migration from other member states.

Just as it has happened in the case of more traditional forms of migration, mainstream parties, particularly centre-right parties, quickly adopted a more restrictive position vis-à-vis freedom of movement, initiating talks about different measures to limit these rights. The proposals made included setting a total quota for migration from the EU (the Conservative Party in the UK), and preventing the migration of the 'poor', particularly with regard to the homeless and Roma people living in illegal camps (since 2010 the Union pour un Mouvement Populaire in France—now Les Républicains—see Parker, 2012—and since 2013 the Christlich-Demokratische Union Deutschlands—Christian Democratic Union of Germany). More restrictive positions gained more purchase in recent general elections in two of the main receivers of EU migration, Germany and the UK, while the European Parliament elections in May 2014 transformed the contestation of EU migration into a veritable pan-European theme.

These episodes reveal the growing divergences between European member states in the area of immigration. It should, however, be noted that the divisions between supporters and opponents of EU migration have been blurred since the onset of the financial and economic crisis. In Germany, for instance, policymakers' concerns over the impact of the new free movers have met the resistance of entrepreneurs perceiving an opportunity to recruit skilled southern European workers who had lost their jobs in the crisis. To this end, they set up the 'Job of my Life' programme, in partnership with the German authorities, to facilitate EU citizens' access to training and internship in sectors of the German economy in need of workforce. Similarly, efforts have been made to facilitate the recognition of foreign diplomas and remove bureaucratic barriers obstructing skilled foreign workers' access to jobs for which they are qualified.

Other countries, on the contrary, have maintained a relatively open position towards freedom of circulation at the rhetorical level but have implemented a series of policies which de facto restricts it. The authorities of Belgium, in particular, began in 2010 to remove the residence permit of EU citizens whom they considered to be making excessive use of the welfare system. To do so, Belgium makes a restrictive interpretation of Directive 2004/38, which allows states to expel EU citizens who represent an 'unreasonable burden' on its public finances. These measures, originally adopted in the post-enlargement context, are now taking on a new meaning as southern European EU citizens are increasingly affected by them. Overall, from a few cases in 2008, Belgium has since 2012 removed the residence permit of around 2,500 EU citizens per year on this basis. Such attempts to use social policy to restrict the freedom of circulation of EU citizens have met strong criticism from the European Commission. Over the past years, the Commission reiterated its support for the principle of freedom of circulation, continuously asked the member states for data to substantiate their claims of welfare abuse and welfare tourism and commissioned independent studies on the impact of EU member states' economies and welfare systems.

None the less, from the different proposals made to restrict freedom of movement within the EU, one in particular has gained ground and a consensus is being built around restricting the rights of EU migrants to welfare as a means of controlling unwanted migration. The Conservative Party in the UK has been voted into government on a pledge to introduce a four-year waiting period before accessing welfare, a measure which might require a treaty change, while Governments in Germany and Austria are debating the drastic reduction or complete withdrawal of child allowances for parents whose children are not living in the country. In doing so, freedom of movement is reproducing the restrictive turn that has dominated immigration policy for migrants from outside the EU in the last decade (Barbulescu, forthcoming).

THE MIGRATION AND HUMANITARIAN CRISIS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

Freedom of movement of people is not the only migration policy area in which member states and EU institutions have taken a restrictive stand. A new tragedy in the Mediterranean Sea, in which over 800 people died near the Libyan shore on their way to Italy in April 2015, has prompted a new set of restrictive measures. The EU Council approved substantial resources for a European search and rescue programme, 'Triton', operated by the European Agency for the Management of Operational Co-operation at the External Borders of the European Union (FRONTEX). Yet, at the same time, it maintained the narrow geographical scope of the programme which restricts missions to 30 nautical miles along the Italian coast, far away from the Central Mediterranean and near the Libyan shore where most tragedies take place. The second noteworthy measure is the initiation of a military intervention that would destroy ships on the Libyan shore before smugglers board the migrants. The use of military force in this context is highly problematic because many of those boarding the ships in Libya are asylum seekers who have the right to claim international protection in Europe. In particular, some 90% of Syrian and Eritrean asylum seekers tend to receive asylum once they reach a European country and apply for protection. Destroying the ships would mean eliminating the only way into Europe that these asylum seekers have. Military intervention is problematic also because the use of the EU-led coalition's military symbolizes the presence of an 'enemy', which in this case would

be civilian ships, and the modus operandi of the military is that of combat.

Finally, the third and perhaps most visible response to the crisis in the Mediterranean is the resettlement and the redistribution quotas. The proposals seek to alleviate the pressure in neighbourhood countries such as Turkey, which host large numbers of asylum seekers from Syria and resettle them across the EU. In contrast, the second quota seeks to alleviate pressure from inside the EU, particularly from Italy, Greece and, later, Hungary, which are the main points of entry into the EU but which, under the Dublin Regulation on people seeking asylum, are required to provide international protection in their countries. The legal basis for such an relocation is Article 78(3) of the Treaty for the Functioning of the European Union, which establishes solidarity mechanisms in emergency situations, and Article 80 of that treaty, which sets forward the principle of solidarity in the area of border checks, asylum and immigration. Initially, the Commission hoped for a non-problematic redistribution but many states voiced concerns regarding their share and asked for more flexibility. France, Spain, Germany and many Central European states all contested the share assigned to them and requested a fairer redistribution. Ultimately, the Commission succeeded in maintaining the two quotas but offered them on a voluntary basis to the member states.

Despite these measures, the crisis grew in intensity with more people trying to enter Europe. On 23 and 24 June 2015 the European Council called another emergency meeting during which it stressed that a durable solution must tackle not only resettlement and relocation but must also strengthen cooperation with countries of origin and countries of transit, and must ensure more effective return, readmission and reintegration for failed asylum seekers and migrants. The Council, in

[end page 37]

collaboration with the European Asylum Support Office (EASO), began to put together a common list of safe countries where migrants could be returned.

In September 2015 the death of Aylan Kurdi, a three-year-old child from Syria who drowned in the Mediterranean and whose photograph was widely shared, shocked the world and triggered a public outcry for European leaders to do more to solve the crisis and secure safe passage for asylum seekers. At an emergency meeting of the Council on 14 of September it was decided to increase the total quota from 40,000 to an additional 120,000 applicants; the following week the EU member states voted to accept national quotas to relocate some 120,000 migrants throughout the EU. However, the vote brought to the fore divisions on the issue between the member states: Finland abstained from the vote, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia voted against, and the UK declined to participate in the quota plans. Other countries, including Denmark were offered an opt-out.

Since the start of the crisis, migration routes into the EU have diversified, with more people seeking to enter through crossing the former Yugoslav republic of Macedonia, Serbia and reaching Hungary on their way to Germany, Sweden and other northern European countries that have proved more welcoming towards refugees.

CONCLUSION

These different examples show that overall, the combination of the crisis context with the increasing migration flows that followed the 2004 and 2007 enlargements have rendered the concept of freedom of circulation of EU workers significantly more controversial in north-western Europe. Responses to tensions around EU migration have, however, not been unanimously to restrict freedom of circulation. Certain bodies such as the European Commission and the private sector continue to support it.

From the perspective of southern European sending countries, crisis-related mobility has also become an increasingly controversial topic, even though those countries had already experienced important migration waves during the 20th century. The different migration histories of those countries, therefore, also partly explain why government responses have varied greatly across southern Europe. As described above, in Spain and Greece migration has strongly increased, particularly among the youngest share of the population that is most severely affected by unemployment. In both countries, however, the authorities have not clearly acknowledged the existence of crisis-related migration, nor implemented policies to encourage it, control it or facilitate its future return. In the case of Spain, in particular, the very acknowledgement of the existence of crisis-related migration has become a sensitive political issue. Indeed, for the governing party, the Partido Popular (People's Party), the fear is that explicit recognition of crisis-related migration could be interpreted as a sign of its mismanagement of the crisis.

In Italy, on the contrary, the issue of a possible loss of skilled labour occurring in the country because of the crisis has been recurring in the media and in parliamentary assemblies. The fear of losing talent that could help the economic recovery has also triggered specific policy responses, such as programmes that grant incentives to Italian researchers working abroad who wish to return. This kind of response, however, is very consistent with the country's emigration policies of the past decades that have sought to engage with citizens abroad. Overall, these examples show that the topic of EU migration has become increasingly sensitive from both the sending and the receiving country perspectives in the post-enlargement and crisis contexts. As EU labour markets and welfare systems are under pressure, some free movers within the EU (particularly low-skilled workers from Central and Eastern Europe) are being perceived as threats, while others (i.e. high-skilled workers) continue to be perceived as a strategic resource by entrepreneurs and even their home country authorities.

In this chapter, we have argued that patterns of intra-European mobility depend on the economic environment, as well as on the public and political discourse and policy in Europe. A new rhetoric that compares and often puts in the same category EU migration and migration from outside the EU is slowly settling and beginning to have consequences for Europeans. A developing set of policy measures aimed at restricting migration of nationals from the 28 member states of the EU is being discussed and/or implemented in several countries in Western Europe, with most efforts being directed towards making access to welfare more difficult. Escalating anti-immigrant attitudes might act as a powerful deterrent to new migrations from the other member states. While the inflow might lose volume, the establishment of significant communities of European migrants indicates that the patterns emerging in a post-crisis environment will endure.

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