

The European Migrant Crisis

Nikolas Soutopoulos *

*Educator in Primary School, MEd, PhD Cand. of University of Ioannina, Greece

Abstract: The turmoil and the instability in the Middle East countries had as result the arrival of a great number of refugees and migrants in the European Union. States tried to face this event by adopting policies and measures that aimed at the relief of these populations and their gradual integration to the local societies. European countries didn't react in the same way on the waves of refugees and migrants that tried to access European Union. There are three different approaches or in other words, three different reactions that EU member states adopted. The reaction to the problem was based on the previous experiences that some countries had with migration, on dominant political ideologies and populist reactions that didn't want to face the problem, on domestic political situation and cultural acceptability by the local societies.

Keywords: Europe, integration, local societies, migrant crisis, policies, refugees.

I. INTRODUCTION

European Migrant Crisis refers to the continuously growing flow of migrants and refugees in the states of the European Union since 2015. According to International Organization for Migration (IOM) and United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC), more than one million refugees and migrants have entered European Union in 2015, while the flow continuous (Poddar, 2016). This situation has come as a challenge for the Union in a time where unity in Europe is under question and economic instability has influenced many countries, especially in the European South such as Greece and Italy and has created a great debate regarding the future of the European venture.

Below I shall make a literature review about this social phenomenon which challenges the European migration policy the last years.

II. MIGRATION CRICIS MEETS EUROPE

The beginning of refugee crisis that challenges Europe can be found back in 2015 when a great number of refugees from the Middle East, North Africa and Southwest Asia started coming to EU in order to seek asylum. The majority of asylum seekers are coming from three countries: Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq. The failure of Arab Spring and the conflict that followed this event had as result for Syria to experience bloody civil war that forced millions of people to leave the country and seek safer places to live. In the case of Afghanistan, the war against the terrorist group of Taliban had as result the economic and political instability, something that was the main reason for thousands of citizens to escape from the country (BBC, 2016). In the last case of Iraq and after the intervention of United States of America the government of the country has not been able to attain solidity and Iraqi citizens are fleeing country to avoid persecution. In addition to the above mentioned, refugees and migrants are trying to reach Europe from other countries such as Eritrea, Pakistan, Nigeria, Somalia and Sudan. Most of these countries are facing economic instability, poverty and totalitarian regimes (BBC, 2016).

Due to the great amount of people that arrived and are still trying to arrive to a state of European Union it is necessary to make an important distinction. The populations that arrived are coming from different backgrounds and different contexts. A distinction between refugees and economic migrants at this point it was necessary. As 'refugees' we define the populations that were forced to leave their countries due to inhospitable conditions that pose danger for their lives. As 'migrants' we define those populations that came to Europe in search of better economic opportunities. It is broadly known that the asylum systems in EU are more lenient towards refugees from Syria, Eritrea, Afghanistan and Iraq (Kingsley, 2015). On the other hand, the applications for asylum from people that come from countries such as Pakistan,

Nigeria and Bangladesh are not successful at the same rate, as the focus of asylum systems in EU are on populations that come from countries which are war-torn, cannot provide normal living conditions and are dangerous for the citizens' lives (Kingsley, 2015).

European countries didn't react in the same way on the waves of refugees and migrants that tried to access European Union. There are three different approaches or in other words, three different reactions that EU member states adopted. The reaction to the problem was based on the previous experiences that some countries had with migration, on dominant political ideologies and populist reactions that didn't want to face the problem, on domestic political situation and cultural acceptability by the local societies (Poddar, 2016).

On the first line, countries such as Germany and Sweden that are economically and politically capable of accepting large number of refugees and have been accepting substantial proportion of refugees (Dullien, 2016). Despite the fact that Dublin Regulation requires refugees to apply for asylum in the 'welcome' country, the country that they first arrive in, German government and EU institutions decided to eliminate the rule so that Germany could accept more refugees and migrants. In that way, the burden for the countries of first arrival would be less (Poddar, 2016).

The second group of countries that didn't have the same reaction as the above mentioned was countries such as the United Kingdom, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia. These countries, although they have the economic capacity and the ability to accept a number of refugees, they denied any involvement to the issue and tried to avoid any burden or participation to the solution of the problem. These countries chose not to accept refugees for political reasons, despite the fact that European Union warned them with important economic sanctions. Finally, Hungary was the one with tougher attitude towards refugees, as the government decided to close its borders with Croatia and Serbia. In this way the route to Northern and Western Europe was closed and thousands of refugees were trapped in other countries because they couldn't move on (Poddar, 2016).

The third group is consisted by countries such as Greece and Italy. These two countries were the main 'welcome-places' for millions of refugees and migrants as both of them are the physical borders of EU. Greece and Italy have welcomed since 2015 disproportionate number of refugees despite the fact that they still struggling themselves with economic recession and debt crisis (Dullien, 2016). European Commission during the last years adopted measures that helped the relief of these countries from the disproportionate burden that they face. However, the lack of single policy in migration crisis from the EU and the unwilling attitude of many countries to cooperate have as result that these two countries have to deal with the issue alone.

The migrant crisis is a challenge for European Union and has put in question the strength of the Schengen Agreement that allows free movement of people between the 26 European member states without border controls. However, border controls reintroduced in 2016 in many member states such as Austria, Denmark, France, Germany, Norway, Poland and Sweden. Despite the effort for creation of a 'mini-Schengen' area consisting of countries that are willing to cooperate in migration policy issues such as Germany, Greece, Finland, Sweden, the Visegrad Group of countries (Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia) continue their anti-migration policies (Poddar, 2016).

EU's response to migration crisis

European Union was asked in 2015 to respond to the hugest wave of migrant and refugee populations that moved to the continent since WWII. Migration policies immediately were set at the top of EU policy agenda and they remain a priority till today as the problem still seems to exist. During 2015 a great number of initiatives such as the activation of the relocation system within the Union and the creation of more hotspots in the arrival countries, have been put on the table and heatedly discussed between the European Institutions, EU member states and third countries.

Till now, most of the measures that adopted didn't go deep enough to tackle the actual problems that migrant crisis created, which was from the one hand the unequal distribution of refugees and migrants between EU countries and from the other hand the relief of population that were in need. This is mainly due to lack of effective action on remodeling the sharing of protection and human rights responsibilities between all EU member state governments in a way that it would overcome the problems and the obstacles that have been created by the current EU Dublin system. The EU policy responses, both internally and in cooperation with third countries, lacked a multi-policy sector approach, as most of the

countries gave priority to domestic affairs concerning internal security and enhanced border controls (Carrera; Blockmans; Gros; Guild, 2015).

Due to the pressing context and the continuous arrival of migrants and refugees from the south- eastern land borders and the Mediterranean, European Union responded with some immediate policy actions that would help the situation.

- A relocation mechanism for asylum seekers within the EU. The new system would help those members confronting higher influx by creating new redistribution criteria and sharing responsibilities across the member states.
- Relocation mechanism for 20.000 refugees from outside the EU and an extra 50 million budget to support it.
- Enhancing the role and the capacities of EU External Border Agency (Frontex).
- Setting up a new hotspot approach in which European agencies like Frontex, Europol and European Asylum Support Office (EASO) would work on 'frontline' member states for identifying, registering and fingerprinting migrants.
- Strengthening Europol's joint maritime information operation in the Mediterranean to deal with migrants' smuggling via CEPOL (European Policy College)
- Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP) Operation in the Mediterranean to tackle with issues concerning traffickers' networks (Carrera; Blockmans; Gros; Guild, 2015)

Except the above mentioned, European Union set four more key 'pillars', immediate actions, more 'medium- term' regarding EU migration policy: 1. Reducing the incentives for irregular migration; 2. Border management (action for saving more lives and securing external borders); 3. Creation of a strong common asylum policy; 4. New policy on legal migration (Carrera; Blockmans; Gros; Guild, 2015).

The challenges that Europe is called to face because of refugee crisis can be considered as merely political. One of the main consequences of this crisis was the huge split that was created between older EU member states such as Germany and member states that joined the EU more recently, such as countries in central or Eastern Europe. Issues such as quota system for refugee allocation to different EU countries and the solidarity that EU institutions and states need to show in order to overcome the problems are basic in this debate (Poddar, 2016).

The debate about how Europe is handling refugee crisis depicts the debate that exists in European societies. According to surveys, public opinion seems to be divided to those that are in favor of a fairer system of relocation between states and to those that they do not want their countries to contribute in any way to the solution. In a poll conducted at the start of refugee crisis in 2015, 60% - 80% of citizens in France, Italy, Spain and United Kingdom stated to be discontent by their government's immigration policies (Barysch, 2016). 94% of respondents in Greece, 88% of people in Sweden and 70% of respondents in France disapprove EU's handling of the refugee crisis (Kern, 2016). Other poll that conducted in 2016 showed that citizens in France, Greece and Britain (61%, 71% and 48% correspondingly) have started to view EU unfavorably because of the way they implement immigration policies (Arnett, 2016). These significantly high percentages show the discontentment of EU citizens with the European Union and especially to issues related to refugee crisis. The debate about the policies and the measures that member states should adopt to tackle the issue have as result the rise of right- wing parties, anti- EU movements and xenophobic voices within many countries in the Union.

Greece has been the primary point of entry for migrants and refugees that fleeing countries from the Middle East. As the European states debate the EU- wide quota system and the process of reallocation of refugee populations Greece has become a scapegoat many times. The lack of cooperation of many European countries has as result the insufficient handling of the crisis from Greece, which faces an economic crisis for more than seven years. The financial instability and the debt crisis followed by the current migrant crisis has dramatically increased Euroscepticism among Greeks and has contributed to the rise of extreme- right movements and parties (Zafiroopoulos, 2016).

The concept of multicultural societies

Multicultural societies have become by no means a recent phenomenon. Migration and movement across national borders have as result the creation of culturally diverse societies. The 'newcomers' are bringing habits, traditions and ways of living that may be totally different to the societies that they are moving to (Bowskill, 2007).

International Journal of Novel Research in Education and Learning

Vol. 5, Issue 5, pp: (25-32), Month: September - October 2018, Available at: www.noveltyjournals.com

Ethnic diversity is continuously increasing in most advanced countries, something that is driven by the sharp increases in immigration. Immigration and diversity seem to affect many and different aspects of a state and society. In the long run it seems that immigration has important cultural, economic, fiscal and developmental benefits. In the short run, immigration and ethnic diversity tend to reduce social solidarity and social capital. Studies have shown that the results of migration can vary. Evidence from the US suggests that in ethnically diverse neighborhoods residents of all races tend to 'hunker down'. Trust between people is lower, altruism and community cooperation rarer and friends fewer. On the other side, it is clear that successful immigrant societies have managed to overcome this type of fragmentation by creating new forms of social solidarity and more encompassing identities (Putnam, 2007).

It is important to understand that the most certain prediction that can be done regarding the refugee and migration waves in Europe and in the rest of the world is that any modern society will be more diverse a generation from now than it is today. This is true from Sweden to the United States and from New Zealand to Ireland. As Robert D. Putnam points out increased immigration and diversity are not only inevitable, but over the long run they are desirable. Ethnic diversity is, on balance, important asset for societies as the history of many west countries demonstrate. As it was mentioned above, ethnic diversity may have impact and challenge social solidarity and inhibit social capital. However, there are examples of societies that have overcome these problems and have succeed in constructing new, more encompassing identities that encourage a broader sense of 'we' (Putnam, 2007).

Benefits of immigration

As it seems, our societies will be more ethnically diverse in the future than they are now. These changes will have impacts on different aspects of life. Although there are authors like Webber and Donahue that underline the difficulties that may occur in the future from the new- coming populations, it is necessary to point out the benefits that have been noticed in diverse societies.

- Many studies support a correlation between ethnic diversity and creativity. The contribution of migrant populations seems to be important in that part of society as many of the scores of studies of collective creativity in work groups such as business, education and so on, support that diversity fosters creativity (Webber & Donahue, 2001; Williams & O' Reilly, 1998).
- Immigration is in general connected to rapid economic growth. Although the debate for consequences in economic sector in the short run, there are significant distributional effects, as studies from the US have shown (Putnam, 2007).
- In advanced countries with aging populations immigration helps to offset the impending fiscal effects of the retirement of the baby- boom generation (Smith & Edmonston, 1997).
- World Bank has highlighted one more benefit of immigration. Studies from the organization suggest that immigration from the global South to the richer North enhances development in the South. This happens firstly because of the remittances from immigrants to their families back home and secondly because these population usually transfer the technological knowledge and the ideas through immigrant networks (World Bank, 2005).

Shifting from reception to integration: the case of Greece

Greek government created a new law regarding Asylum (4375/16) that was completely different from the existing legislation and in line with the requirements of the recast Asylum Procedures Directive. The agreement between EU and a third country, Turkey, in the March of 2018 had as result the reduction of the number of arrivals in Greece.

In Greece as in other countries that faced the problem such as Italy and Hungary, policies that aimed to the full integration were mostly granted to those populations that were characterized as "refugees" with a recognized refugee status or with a protection status by international community. Greece developed legal provisions related to the procedures that asylum seekers had to follow. The legislation and the actions concerning reception, recognition and integration of asylum seekers in Greece were focusing on five main domains: residence permits, family reunification, settlement restrictions, access to labour marker (during asylum procedure, eligibility for welfare benefits and health care (for persons granted asylum) (European Parliament EMPL Committee, 2017).

Greek government has supported measures concerning the integration of refugee populations in the education system as well as in the labour market. The implementation of this kind of measures was difficult as the country had neither the experience from previous asylum seekers nor the ability due to financial crisis to respond effectively to the problem. Greece recognized that asylum seekers and refugees have to move from support schemes to national schemes in order to start their integration process. There are two types of national schemes:

- Safety- net coverage of basic needs to disadvantaged groups, asylum seekers, refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection.
- ‘Affirmative action’ schemes that provide support to the asylum seekers that are under international protection in order to access mandatory Greek language courses, vocational training and professional orientation schemes, academic qualification etc. (European Parliament EMPL Committee, 2017).

Education of refugee and migrant populations

The fundamental transformation in economic, social and political structures in the post- Cold War era had as result the escalation of the phenomenon of international migration. During the last years and due to the crisis in Middle East countries, European states are attracting migrants from less developed countries or countries that are under dissolution like Syria and Iraq. European nations turned from immigrant- sending countries into immigrant- receiving countries (Levels; Dronkers, 2008).

These developments have consequences for both outflow and inflow countries. The influx of immigrants has raised multiple questions on the way the arriving population will integrate into the society. Refugee and immigrants’ economic integration can be explained at some extent by individual characteristics such as gender, language skills, human capital, age, work experience and marital status (Kao; Thompson, 2003).

Education is considered as the most important means of social advancement for immigrant populations and thus a measure of the level and the effectiveness of integration into the arrival countries. As this paper focuses on the education of pupils and newcomer populations it is important to understand that education system provides an opportunity for social advancement for migrants as it allows children of migrants to acquire skills and obtain higher paying and higher status jobs with a concomitant rise in the family’s social standing (Levels; Dronkers, 2008).

In order to explain immigrants’ educational performance in different contexts in Europe, social scientists have focused on both individual and school characteristics. As many authors have indicated, individual characteristics such as socio-economic background, gender or familial cultural capital can affect immigrants’ educational performance. In addition, cross- national studies on educational performance have shown that school size, socio- economic and ethnic segregation are also factors that affect students’ performance.

Marks (2005) tried to identify the most important characteristics on the performance of first and second- generation migrants in different countries in Europe. He states that socio- economic, socio- cultural and school characteristics explain the differences in scholastic achievement between native and immigrant pupils. However, after taking into account variables in the individual and school level, he establishes that differences between migrants and natives vary depending on the country of research. The macro- level characteristics play crucial role in order to understand the differences in educational performance between countries.

Refugee students have some characteristics that distinguish them from the rest of student population. These characteristics are related from the one hand to the difficulties that refugee populations facing during their effort to reach other countries (issues related to health) and on the other hand it is deeply related to migration policies that governments adopt in different countries (the kind of integration that governmental policies apply for these populations).

A great majority of migrant and refugee students seem to experience educational disadvantages stemming from poverty and poverty related health problems such as malnutrition, parasitic infections and chronic illness, something that may have serious consequences to the educational behavior and performance (Kindler, 1995). Jensen (2009), underlines four crucial factors that affect children living in poverty and that influence the school performance. The first is the emotional and social challenges, the second is the stress, the third is the cognitive lags and the fourth is related to health issues.

International Journal of Novel Research in Education and Learning

Vol. 5, Issue 5, pp: (25-32), Month: September - October 2018, Available at: www.noveltyjournals.com

One of the main characteristics of migrant students is that they may need to attend several schools during the academic year. This fact has as result the difficulty to adapt to new classrooms with new teachers, curricula, schoolmates and school policies while on the same time they have to adjust themselves to new neighborhoods. Mobility seems to be a key factor that affects academic achievement, school progress, grades, scores as well as behavior in classroom and school community (Rumberger, 2011); Reynolds et al., 2009).

Several studies that conducted in United States of America by between 1990- 2008 by Reynolds et al., (2009) showed that students that were forced to move in frequent rate were having significantly lower reading and math achievement and that each additional move added to a decline in achievement. Children that moved more than three times had significantly higher dropout rates than students that were stable to a school. At this point we should bear in mind that the cases can vary depending on the concept of mobility and the cause of mobility as well. The cases of refugees that this paper examines probably are different from the ones that other authors and researchers have examined. However, there are some common issues that refugee students are facing regardless the place or time.

The Directorate for Education and Training Policy Division of the Organization for Economic Co- operation and Development (OECD, 2010) has pointed out some school level policies that states are asked to apply regarding migrant education. The proposed policies cover the three basic areas related to the education of migrant and refugee populations. The first is related to the strengthen language support, the second to the creation of an effective learning and teaching environment for students and the third paves the policy for enhancing parental and community involvement. More specifically:

Strengthen language support

- OECD suggests the provision of continuous and systematic language support on populations of different educational levels. The goal for countries that accept refugees and migrants is to develop clear language policy with goals for language development support across the entire school system.
- The success of language courses is deeply related to the assessment based on individual language needs and language levels. Each student needs practical tools such as assessment kits and guidelines that are age and culturally appropriate. States should establish the guidelines on how to share the educational material and information to different populations.
- OECD suggests additional staff in schools (teachers) that are trained in second language acquisition and that are able to ensure the smooth transition from induction to integration of students.
- Schools should find local and cost- effected solution to provide migrants and refugees with translated materials and interpreters.
- Parents are part of this procedure. State policies and schools should encourage parents first of all to take part themselves in language classes in order to act as role models and secondly to try to read at home both in mother language and the language of instruction.
- Mother languages of migrant populations are valuable. OECD suggests the offer of selective courses in mother language as foreign language learning and the selection for students to use their mother language in state examination systems (OECD, 2010).

Measures that support the creation of an effective teaching and learning environment for migrant students

- Teachers at multicultural schools should be provided with guidelines and support that will help them address diversity issues and organize second language development across the curriculum.
- The schools should use tools that allow teachers to monitor the progress and the performance of their students.
- It has to be ensured that teachers effectively and consistently address the needs of migrant students. Modules on formative assessment, differentiated instruction and training courses for dealing with diversity should be adopted.
- Offer of in- service training on diversity for school leaders.

International Journal of Novel Research in Education and Learning

Vol. 5, Issue 5, pp: (25-32), Month: September - October 2018, Available at: www.noveltyjournals.com

- Strengthen the capacity of teachers and school leaders in assessment and evaluation. Provide tools, incentives and feedback mechanisms for schools to engage in school- self evaluation and continuously improve performance.
- School cooperation and ideas sharing should be encouraged, especially among schools with similar proportions of immigrant students. Formalized networks and discussion between teachers, educators and school leaders will allow professionals to learn from each other.
- Recruitment of more teachers and especially of teachers with immigrant background.

Measures for enhancing parental and community involvement

- OECD proposes the creation of a national platform in order to promote and support migrant and refugee parent involvement in children's education.
- Creation of experimental programs in schools and municipalities that involve parents in their children's education.
- Provision of training to schools and teachers on how to help the building of partnership between local communities and migrant populations.
- Establishment of home- school- community liaison coordinators within schools that will promote the communication between teachers, families and communities.
- Engagement of university students with immigrant background through mentor programs in primary and secondary schools.
- Enhancement of cross-sector cooperation between schools, social welfare, health and housing in order to improve education outcomes of migrant students (OECD, 2010).

REFERENCES

- [1] Annett G., 2016, *Is Britain the Most Eurosceptic Country?*, The Guardian, <https://www.theguardian.com/news/datablog/2016/jun/23/is-britain-most-eurosceptic-country>
- [2] Barysch K., 2016, *Is Migration a Threat or an Opportunity for the EU?*, Published in: <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2016/02/is-migration-a-threat-or-an-opportunity-for-Europe/>
- [3] BBC, 2016, *Migrant Crisis: Migration to Europe Explained in Seven Charts*, BBC Europe (BBC News) <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34131911>
- [4] Bowskill M., Lyons E., Coyle A., 2007, *The rhetoric of acculturation: When integration means assimilation*, British Journal of Social Psychology, 46, 793- 813
- [5] Carrera S., Blockmans S., Gros D., 2015, *The EU's Response to Refugee Crisis: Taking Stock and Setting Policy Priorities*, CEPS Essay 20/16
- [6] Dullien S., 2016, *Paying the Price: The Cost of Europe's Refugee Crisis*, http://www.ecfr.eu/page/-/ECFR_168_PAYING_THE_PRICE_-_THE_COST_OF_EUROPE'S_REFUGEE_CRISIS.pdf
- [7] European Commission, 2017, *Integrating refugee and migrant children into the educational system in Greece*, ESPN Flash Report 2017/ 67
- [8] European Parliament, 2017, *Integration of Refugees in Greece, Hungary and Italy Comparative analysis*, Study for the EMPL Committee
- [9] Kao G., Thompson J.S., 2003, *Racial and ethnic stratification in educational achievement and attainment*, Annual Review of Education, vol. 29, pp. 417- 42
- [10] Kingsley P., 2015, *10 Ways to Manage the Migration Crisis*, The Guardian, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/sep/04/10-ways-to-manage-the-migration-crisis>
- [11] Levels M., Dronkers J., 2008, *Educational performance of native and immigrant children from various countries of origin*, Ethnic and Racial Studies, Vol. 31 No. 8, pp. 1404- 1425

International Journal of Novel Research in Education and Learning

Vol. 5, Issue 5, pp: (25-32), Month: September - October 2018, Available at: www.noveltyjournals.com

- [12] Marks G.N., 2005, *Accounting for immigrant non- immigrant differences in reading mathematics in twenty countries*, Ethnic and Racial Studies, vol. 28, pp. 925- 46
- [13] OECD, 2010, *School Level Policies for Migrant Education Pointers for policy development*, Directorate for Education and Training Policy Division, Available at: <http://www.oecd.org/education/school/46679158.pdf>
- [14] Poddar S., 2016, *European Migrant Crisis: Financial Burden or Economic Opportunity?*, Social Impact Research Experience (SIRE), 43, University of Pennsylvania
- [15] Putnam R., 2007, *E Pluribus Unum: Diversity and Community in the Twenty- first Century: The 2006 Johan Skytte Prize Lecture*, Nordic Political Science Association, ISSN 0080- 6757
- [16] Smith J., Edmonston B., 1997, *The new Americans: Economic, Demographic and Fiscal Effects of Immigration*. Washington, DC: National Academy Press
- [17] Williams K. Y. & O' Reilly C.A., 1998, *Demography and Diversity in Organizations: A Review of 40 years of research*, in Staw, B.M. & Cummings, L.L., eds, *Research in Organizational Behavior*, vol. 20, Greenwich, CT: JAI Press