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## **MIGRATION AND REFUGEE CRISIS IN EUROPE. THE GERMAN AND UK RESPONSE TO THIS EXODUS**

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### **Abstract**

In the present paper, the authors intend to make an exploration upon the political and legislative studies of the European Union regarding the refugee crisis, through an analysis of the EU studies on the migration and the asylum policy, presenting new potential approaches in this difficult situation and trying to offer political recommendations and possible suggestions for further analyses. The immigrants entered the European Union using maritime and terrestrial ways, ways that proved to be dangerous and fatal in many cases, thus leading to a devastating humanitarian crisis in all Europe. In this respect, the European Union officials tried to create immigration policies based on the cross-border management and increased security norms. Nevertheless, many authors, researchers, groups and non-governmental organizations counter-attacked this approach and invited the European Union to extend its policies for including also less radical measures. Until now, the Union stays fragmented and undecided about offering a concrete answer for this situation.

The authors refer to: the individual interest of the immigrating persons, the quantitative-type interest, operating the analysis of the official public written documents with certain judgement and responsibility, the bibliographic method, the theoretic modelling method. For a better understanding, the paper presents a comparative analysis between the approaching modalities of the refugee crisis in Germany and Great Britain, evidencing the differences between the two countries EU members in managing the increased number of refugees.

### **Keywords**

refugee crisis, European Union, migration, refugees, political asylum.

### **JEL Classification**

**F00, F01, F2, F22**

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### **Introduction**

The illegal migration cases and the request for asylum have rapidly increased, from one day to another, to become overwhelming for the countries in the Southern Europe, fact that facilitated an unprecedented crisis that surprised both the European Union and the entire world. **The general objective** of the present paper is to explore the political and legislative approaches of the European Union about the refugee crisis, trying to highlight the effects that these had upon the European countries. In this respect, the paper tries to respond to the

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following questions: *Are the actual policies concerning the immigrants requesting asylum in the European Union viable enough to respond in an adequate way to the migration crisis that threatens the EU existence itself? If not, what measures could be taken to help sorting this problem out?* More precisely, this paper investigates the way in which the EU regulations approach this subject, analyses the critical factors within the crises and concludes in what measure the European Union solutions facilitated solving the crises. The paper also grants a particular importance to the way in which the solidarity concept between the European Union Member States has become a greater and greater obstacle concerning the management of this problem and tries to determine if the actual preoccupations within the EU Agenda concerning the migration adequately approach this aspect. For a better understanding, the paper presents a comparative analysis between the ways to approach the refugee crisis in Germany and Great Britain, evidencing the differences between the two countries - EU members, in managing the increased number of refugees.

The research methodology is selected in accordance with the specificity of the research directions, being different from other methodologies by a particular vision that harmonizes the aspects of dynamics, of rapid and unpredictable modifications, derived from the European migration that economically and socially affected all the EU member states. The authors refer to: the individual interest of the immigrating persons, the quantitative-type interest, operating the analysis of the official public written documents with certain judgement and responsibility, the bibliographic method, the theoretic modelling method. At the same time, the research appeals to data, practical methods, applications in the field of economic, social and political sciences, and also of the international relations. The main method used by the authors to collect data was the method of document analyzing, particularly of the activity reports of the European Union, documents of policies, official statistics.

Many studies upon migration indicate that an incomplete data provided from the population side represents one of the strongest barriers of the migration (Seifert-Vogt, 1991; Heitmueller, 2005; Baláž, 2012). According to the social theory on migration based on the risk of abhorrence, the decision to leave the country is a slow process, based on the hypothesis according to which the connections between the destination country and the mother country are settled by the pioneer immigrants on their own. (Kotyrló, 2017). Among the decisions concerning the migration, we can mention the will to live in a free and democratic society, personal security or quality health and educational services, that to contribute to a high quality of life. (Kotyrló, 2017).

Most of the European Commission reports acknowledged that the governments have a negative impact upon migrants integration and that a closer cooperation among the EU countries must exist when it comes about managing the migrants and refugees flow (European Commission, 2011, 2014). It was also acknowledged that the mass-media had a negative impact upon the migrant's portraying, the implementation of a "more positive vision upon the migrants and their contribution for the society, through a more precise, impartial and realistic image of the migrants" being a necessity (European Commission, 2011: 9). As Richardson and Colombo (2013) argue, the inflammatory language about the migration and the migrants is currently more and more heard from the traditional national politicians side (Berry, Inaki, Moore, 2015). For example, in July 2015, the British Prime-Minister, David Cameron was criticized for describing the migrants trying to arrive in the Great Britain as "swarms of people that come in the Mediterranean Sea" (BBC News, 2015a). The European agenda on the migration (2016) analyzed the flow of refugees in a structured manner, on criteria related to the incentives reduction for the illegal migration, life-saving and external borders security, consolidating the EU policy in terms of asylum granting and developing new policies concerning the legal migration (Racheru, 2016).

The key limitation of this research is the fact that, although the peak of immigration to Europe has ended, the mass migration is still ongoing and continuously changing. Given this dynamics, many of the investigated processes, including the trends, the problems related to the legislative processes and the presented ideologies, are difficult to assess in strict terms and, most probably will suffer substantial modifications in the upcoming period.

### **The Management of the Refugees Crisis in Germany**

According to the data provided by the German Agency for Refugees, within 2011-2016, Germany recorded a historic peak of 1,091,894 asylum requesters, the largest number of refugees arriving to an Occidental country after The World War II. The dynamics of the asylum requests increase is impressive. Thus, in 2011, a number of 53,347 refugees had sought asylum in Germany, their number increasing with almost 400% along a period of three years, and consequently, in 2014, Germany received approximately 202,843 asylum requests. This ascending trend was mainly determined by an increasing number of refugees coming from Syria, Afghanistan and Irak, that are among the most important six countries of AOAV (Action on Armed Violence), as most affected by the explosive violence between 2011 and 2016 (Eurostat, 2016).

**The German policy towards refugees can be presented through the following approaches** (Euractiv, 2015c):

- Irak, Syria and Afghanistan are among the most affected by violence and are constantly counted among the countries with positive results when it comes to asylum granting;
- the refugees from the Balcanic countries are not affected by the explosive violence and are usually rejected;
- the applicants from Nigeria, Yemen and Pakistan are also preponderantly rejected, although all the three countries are among the most affected by the explosive violence according to the AOAV list;
- Iran and Eritrea, where the refugees are often prosecuted, have a constant acceptance rate of approximately 40%.

From the point of view of the **motivational factors**, that generated the migration from third countries in 2016, an analysis developed by the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees reveals the fact that 7% from the immigrants chose to relocate to Germany from family reasons, approximately 3% received a residence permit that also proves their right to work, and 6% out of these aimed to continue their studies. Due to the increased flow of Syrian refugees, the immigration, from humanitarian reasons, continued to stay at a high level (approximately 8%), and the residence permits granted for finalizing the asylum procedures increased by 24% (compared with 2014), also reflecting the increase of immigrants asking for political asylum (Bălgăr, 2017).

The German citizens do not entirely reject the Syrian immigrants running away from the war, but are worried by the proportions this problem has reached and by the possible society and security consequences. The agreement with Turkey, signed on March, 18<sup>th</sup>, 2016, stipulating a trade system between EU and Turkey, applicable only for the Syrian refugees, seemed to have brought a temporary and pretty isolated solution for the situation taken into consideration (EU Turkey Statement, 2016). The main focus of this agreement is releasing

the pressure put upon Greece by stopping and taking over the refugees by Turkey, mission for which Turkey received a financing of EUR 3 billion, following that, if necessary, this budget to be increased along the way (Manolache, 2016).

Germany faces a **demographic aging**, the German business sector highlighting that, given the crucial advantages offered by the good education, training and the abilities the refugees have, they should be integrated in the German society (Ageing Report, 2016). By this logic, the German business sector drew the attention upon the necessity to speed up the regulation that allow finding a job and integrating the admitted immigrants. Consequently, the private sector has the role to ensure covering its necessity of labour force, especially in the context of foreshadowing the long term necessities for Germany (Manolache, 2016).

Another extremely important aspect brought by the increased number of immigrants is related to **enhancing the religious diversity**, that generates a series of institutional, political and legal challenges. This way, as Turkey has been representing one of the main source-countries for immigrants to Germany along the past few decades but also in the context of the recent „waves” of immigrants coming from the muslim countries, the Islam became the third majority religion, after Christianity and Judaism (The Expert Council of German Foundation on Integration and Migration, 2016). Consequently, a survey accomplished in 2016 by the above mentioned Council, reveals the fact that, most of the interviewed citizen approve the Islamic religious education (for the ones belonging to this religion), but disagree about the increased numerical weight of the Islam sympathizers.

Another facet of the religious diversity is also *the potential discriminating attitude of the employees in the private sector*. In this respect, the national studies we consulted indicated the fact that the discrimination against the muslim population in the occupational process represents a rare phenomenon, having an exceptional character, consequently, no political actions in the field of labour force occupation is necessary. As the main difficulties in the process of integrating the muslim immigrants on the labour force market are more related to not speaking the German language well enough, to the lacks in education or to the lack of abilities and professional qualifications, the Government actions should be targeted more towards the educational sector.

**The Management of the Refugees Crisis in Great Britain**

In Great Britain, the number of asylum requests stayed relatively stable in the past few years. In 2015-2016, there existed significant increases in the number of requests coming from Irak, Sudan and Afghanistan. The number of the requesters from Syria increased by 29% in 2016 compared to 2015.

**Table no. 1 The Dynamics of the Asylum Requests Between 2012-2017**

| 2012   | 2013   | 2014   | 2015   | 2016   | 2017   |
|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| 25,898 | 27,978 | 29,875 | 32,344 | 39,968 | 38,517 |

Source: Eurostat, 2017

Here, the asylum requesters are asked to present themselves to the authorities immediately after their arrival. The immigration officers file a request on the behalf of the asylum requesters, while the latter have to explain the way they were persecuted in their origin country and why they are afraid to come back and also to provide any kind of proofs to sustain their request. The British system of asylum granting is complex and strictly monitored and controlled. It is very difficult for a person to be granted asylum, the process of decision making is extremely tough and the many of the requests are rejected. In 2016, 13,230 requesters were taken to detention centers. Unfortunately, half of the asylum requesters remain in detention during the process of asylum granting. Despite the Government's commitment in 2010 to end the detention for the immigrants, 71 children were taken to custody in 2016. Starting 2005, the majority of the refugees are permitted to stay in The United Kingdom only for five years. This makes it difficult for them to make any decision concerning their own future, to find a job and to make concrete plans for their lives in the Great Britain.

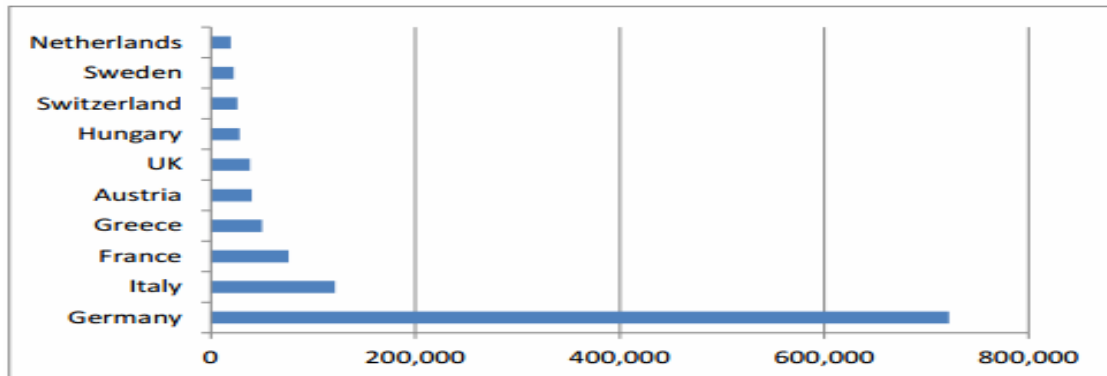
**Great Britain hosts less than 1% from the refugees worldwide**, that numbers more than 59.5 million forcibly dislocated persons, globally (UNHCR, 2016). Among them, more than 5 million persons ran away from the conflict in Syria. Turkey is the biggest host country in the world for the refugees, presently offering sanctuary for 2.5 million Syrian refugees, while Jordan and Lebanon host 1.7 million. **Until the end of 2016, Great Britain reinstated 5,706 Syrian refugees.**

#### **A Comparative Analysis**

Germany demonstrated an impressive attention towards the human rights when it symbolically opened its gates for the refugees coming from Syria, on August 25<sup>th</sup>, 2015. Seven months later, the doors were closed. The EU-Turkey Agreement, most of it negotiated by Angela Merkel after she was put under the pressure coming from the right-wing politics, represented a step behind from the opening initially manifested. Germany registered the largest number of asylum request applications, **more than 18 times more the number of applications registered in The Great Britain**. Both Sweden and Hungary, having much smaller populations than The Great Britain, had, proportionally, more requests (Figure no 1).

Germany offers corresponding conditions for the refugees, the main problems being for those who have to live 100 persons in a shelter. The mass shelters may be an extremely stressing environment, particularly for children and pregnant women, but also for those with psychological problems. The free-of-charge psychological care, was considered to be extremely useful for integrating the refugees in the community. The efficient examination and granting of psychological assistance for more refugees that witnessed explosive violence is considered to have a positive impact upon them and also upon the German society, overall.

**When it comes about approaching the European crisis in terms of asylum and refugees, The Great Britain left Europe many years ago.** In fact, it is the direct consequence of the "opt-out" policy initiated by Tony Blair in 1997, for the EU issues related to immigration and asylum.



**Fig. no. 1 The Number of Asylum Applications in the Main European Destination Countries**

*Source: Eurostat 2017*

Theresa May succeeded in keeping Great Britain at distance from the most severe refugee crisis, since The World War II. Only the moment the crisis was to spread along The Great Britain's shores – either the by the expected "invasion" coming from the camp in Calais, or by the images that showed how the immigrants died sailing in the Mediterranean Sea – the British politicians felt the need to take action. While Angela Merkel gave a humanitarian response by opening the German borders for hundreds of thousands of asylum requesters, Theresa May, as a Ministry of Interior argued that, supplying search and rescue ships in the Mediterranean Sea represented an unintended "attraction factor" for "dangerous actions of crossing the sea and consequently, leads to tragic and useless deaths" May, Theresa (2015). In her speech at the Conservatives Conference in 2015, Theresa May described an asylum system that granted the statute of refugee to those having arrived to Great Britain and Europe, as „a reward coming from the richer, luckier and stronger "(The Guardian, 2015), not only to the most vulnerable. In exchange, she proposed a system on two levels that would discourage people to make this dangerous trip to Europe: some would benefit from temporary protection measures, while others could benefit from reinstatement programs that maintain a longer term protection (May, Theresa 2015). UNHCR considers that the proposal for a „differentiated treatment” for the refugees is not legal and that the British Government actually „activated a pause” in relation with the proposed policy. However, UK put into practice and followed exactly this policy towards the refugees European crisis. The paradox is that, while The Great Britain was almost alone in refusing to take part in solutioning the European crisis two years ago, even in principle, **Theresa May's policy is now the one asking for the majority support in Europe.** May is an unshaken supporter of the recent EU-Turkey agreement to reduce the refugees flow in the Aegean Sea and offered a significant number of asylum staff in Italy and Greece, to help process the asylum requests and facilitate the fast repatriation of the rejected ones. Theresa May did everything she could to resist the opening of a legal path to Great Britain for the ones seeking asylum, that had reached the camp in Calais.

This does not mean that the biggest refugee crisis after The World War II did not trigger a strong humanitarian response among the British population, the same it happened in the rest of Europe. When the crisis was the acutest, the British politicians responded. David Cameron committed himself to bring 20,000 of the most vulnerable Syrian refugees to Great Britain, within a direct relocation program. Confronted with additional pressures, Cameron agreed bring extra 3,000 unaccompanied refugees from the Middle East. Yet, there is a field in which Great Britain wishes to develop a common European approach towards the asylum and refugees and that belongs to data bases area. Great Britain opted for the Schengen

information systems even if not a part of its open-border space and hardly admitted fingerprinting the immigrants at their arrival.

Although in her speech at the Conference in 2015, Mrs. May stressed out the fact that "not in one thousand years" she would join a new common policy with EU in the field of immigration and asylum, given the position of Germany - to share the responsibility with the whole EU for the refugees crisis - Theresa May's approach has become the response common to all Europe. When we speak about the refugee policy, The Great Britain might not join Europe, but Europe rapidly lines up to the solutions proposed by Great Britain.

### Conclusions

The comparative analysis between the ways in which two of the most important Member States of the European Union, Germany and respectively Great Britain, managed the refugees crisis, evidenced an absolute difference between a permissive policy, open to absorb a large number of immigrants, respectively the German one, and a restrictive, conservative policy, the British one. The failure the European Union experienced, in what the migration crisis in 2015 concerns, could have had much more reduced consequences if all the Member States had accepted a standard asylum procedure, to also include a correct and equitable responsibilities breakdown and the distribution of the number of asylum requesters, likewise. Unfortunately, the national policies and interests were more important than the common interest to stop the wave of refugees, fact that made the common asylum policy to be non-operating.

Another method by which the EU could have managed the wave of refugees better but also by which the number of life-wastes would have been dramatically reduced, would have been granting a fast and safe alternative by which to provide the transportation of refugees from the affected zones to the Member States of the European Union. Either planes had been granted for transporting the refugees or ships, to take them over in their attempt to cross the Mediterranean Sea, the number of dead refugees would have been considerably lower and the European Union could have had a better control about their destination country.

Although, along its history, the European Union faced other immigrant crisis, it seems that it did not learn much from the past experiences, in order to develop a common asylum policy, to be operational at the entire EU level. This aspect can be fixed if the Member States understand that, the cooperation relations and an equal distribution of the responsibilities represent a fundamental condition for being able to manage a future crisis in a common way. But, as long as the common European Union policies will not be unanimously accepted and implemented by the Member States and the national policies will be a priority before the common policies, conceiving and implementing a completely functional strategy on immigration will be difficult to accomplish, the European Union being thenceforth exposed to the risk of facing such crisis again and not being able to properly and efficiently manage it.

### Note

The paper is a continuation of a research in this field, belonging to the authors, *The Migration Crisis and the Impact on the European Union Economic Diplomacy. How to Solve It ?*, Authors: Anca Gabriela Ilie, Dan Dumitriu, IBIMA Publishing Journal of Eastern Europe Research in Business and Economics, (2017), <http://ibimapublishing.com/articles/JEERBE/2017/562051/562051.pdf>

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