

1. WHAT IS MIGRATION?

Mari-Liis Jakobson

In this chapter, you will find out what migration and mobility are, how many migrants there are in the world, and to whom and why they are important in the world today.

We live in a world that is more and more characterised by globalisation. Technology and education broaden our world, allowing us to see and travel long distances: live in a world where it's easy to read current US newspapers every day, have almost real-time updates on Korean pop stars or take a look through a webcam at waking hippopotamuses in a Kenyan national park. Spending a gap year between high school and university by raising money on an Australian farm, volunteering in South East Asia, or traveling around the world is a realistic option. The world is simultaneously getting wider but also feels like it fits into the palm of your hand.

Of course, globalisation also has a less appealing face: the global economic space increases uncertainty and insecurity, as investment, production or supply chains can change location/move from one country to another with playful ease; global giants challenge local small players, and the confrontation between the winners and losers of globalisation is becoming more pronounced. As always, there is no joy without sorrow.

Who are migrants and how many are there?

External migration is also a phenomenon of globalisation. International migration is the movement of people from their country of usual residence to another country of which they are not nationals. This does not include short-term travel, such as holidays and business trips or visiting friends. Migration is something more permanent. When collecting migration statistics, the definition of a migrant is often also based on the time spent abroad, which is at least one year.

In 2020, [more than 280 million people](#) lived in a country other than their country of birth. (You can view the regularly updated data on the International Organization for Migration's (IOM) migration statistics portal <https://migrationdataportal.org>.) About every 30th person in the world is an international migrant. If migrants were to make up a separate country, its population would only be surpassed by China (1.41 billion people), India (1.39 billion) and the USA (329 million). Whether such large-scale migration is unprecedented is discussed in **Chapter 2, "The History of Migration"**.

People travel for very different reasons. Based on these, we can divide migration into voluntary and forced migration. Voluntary migration means any migration that is related to people's choices: for example, the desire to go abroad to earn money or seek a better life, to live with a family member living in another country, to go abroad to study an exciting profession or simply to discover the world. However, in some places, migration takes place due to the lack of other options. Examples of this are if a person is politically persecuted or has almost no chances of long-term survival in their home country. Back in 2015, forced migrants accounted for [less than 10% of all migrants, but their share is growing rapidly](#). We talk more about the causes of migration in **Chapter 3 "Why Do People Migrate?"**, while forced migration is discussed in more detail in **Chapter 7 "Refugees and Asylum"** and **Chapter 12 "Climate Migration"**.

Migration can occur over long distances or within regions. The vast majority (about 70%) migrate in their immediate region: Europeans in Europe, Africans in Africa, Asians in Asia. Most people migrate from lower-income countries to higher-income countries. Statistically, it is very rare for citizens of the world's poorest countries to reach the richest countries, but moving to somewhat better-off countries is common. However, migration from one highly developed country to another is not uncommon either. For many of us, citizens of highly developed countries, migration is a taken-for-granted possibility. For example, within the European Union, we are not required to present a passport at state borders. At the same time, the borders of many developing countries are more closed, and reaching another country is a real challenge.

Of course, it is not always necessary to move abroad. People migrate from one part of the country to another, from rural areas to big cities, sometimes vice versa: this is called internal migration. The number of domestic migrants is several times higher than the number of international migrants. For example, in 2018, [there were 763 million people in the world living outside of their place of birth](#).

In addition to migrants, there are also more short-term travellers, such as those who take short-term or seasonal jobs abroad or commute between countries for work or due to lifestyle. Thus, in addition to migration, there is more and more talk about mobility. Mobile people can include a student who spends a semester at a foreign university, as well as a Ukrainian who has been a seasonal farmworker in Estonia for many years, but whose home is still in Ukraine. A well-off pensioner can also be mobile, spending summers in a Nordic home, but flying to his/her second home on the Canary Islands when the weather turns cold and wet. This phenomenon is also known as sun migration or lifestyle migration. Its practitioners can, of course, be found in all age groups. But there are also many mobile professionals whose work requires that they occasionally go abroad, to another organisation to exchange experiences or find new perspectives.

Why is migration important?

Migration has a significant impact on modern societies as well as on the economy. International migrants amount to [almost a tenth of the world's total economic output](#), on average three times more per capita than locals. So international migration is an extremely influential process in the world today. For more information on the economic and social impact of migration, see **Chapter 9, "The Economic Impact of Migration"**, **Chapter 10, "The Social Impact of Migration"** and **Chapter 11, "Integration"**.

Migration in itself is never good or bad. Its effects always depend on the context. Migration also looks very different, depending on whether we look at it from the point of view of the country of emigration or the country of immigration, or consider the migrant's perspective instead. For an individual, migration is usually a life-changing event, a sequence of experiences that affects his/her lifestyle, identity and relationships.

From the point of view of the destination country, immigration is not the story of one person; it is often a much more anonymous process: it usually means population diversification as well as additional workers and consumers. And at the same time, there are often quite adverse opinions towards immigrants.

For the country of origin, migration can mean a loss of one of their own and there is also talk of brain drain. In almost a quarter of the world's countries, the population is shrinking as a result of migration.

Estonia also uses the metaphor of the demographic WC: when a part of the population leaves, the motivation of others to stay also decreases because the market dries up. And population reproduction is stifled because it is often people at the age of starting a family who migrate. Fortunately, compared to many other Central and Eastern European countries, Estonia has done quite well, but more on that later.

Of course, some countries breathe a sigh of relief when some citizens leave: this gives the still growing domestic population more opportunities in the labour market and reduces the country's social burden. Moreover, today we manage to keep in touch with our overseas communities even over long distances, and emigrants often make a significant contribution to both their home society and its economy. Whereas until a few decades ago migration often meant a one-way movement, today most migrants are multinational: they may create a new life in the destination country and remain there permanently, but they also maintain relations and ties in the country of origin. The perspective of countries of origin is also discussed in more detail in **Chapter 8, "Emigration and Transnational Communities"**.

Therefore, migration is something that involves different interests. Migration is very important from an economic point of view because people who migrate are a migrating workforce and consumers. Migration is also very important from a social and cultural point of view, as it means being exposed to something different, which can have both enriching and conflictual effects. However, in some places, migration can also serve foreign policy, helping promote transnational relations, or instead be a means of establishing a position of power. Many highly developed countries use visa policy as a carrot or stick to motivate authoritarian regimes to cooperate: respect human rights, or otherwise the elite's right to travel to the destination country will be lost. However, some countries have used their strategic position as a transit country for illegal migration to impose their terms on others: carry out this arms deal with us, or else the refugee ships will sail from our ports again. So, it is no wonder that countries have a growing desire to somehow regulate migration and also integration. You can get a better idea of how countries regulate migration in **Chapter 4 "Migration Policy"**, **Chapter 5 "How does Estonia regulate migration?"** and **Chapter 6 "Illegal Migration"**.

Of course, migration is an issue that triggers tensions. This is not something that most people would think about every day, but migration is an easily politicised issue. And when things start to heat up, there is also a danger of polarisation, where people are divided into two camps: some think that migration is something great, and at least as many regard it as an existential threat. I would compare migration to a glass that is partially filled with water. It is only natural that some people think that the glass is half full and others think that it's half empty. And there are societies where the glass is indeed more full or quite empty. But one should certainly not believe those who talk about that glass of water as a great flood, nor those who claim that there is no glass. You can find out more about the public debate on migration in **Chapter 13, "Migration and Public Opinion"**.

This series aims to not necessarily change anyone's beliefs about migration but to provide a collection of arguments on which to justify one's views. Hopefully, the picture will become both more complex and also clearer.

Discussion points

- Before delving into the following chapters, write down what changes you think migration will bring. How does this affect the life of the migrant? The destination country? The country of origin? Please review and complement these answers again after finishing the following chapters.
- What is the difference between migration and mobility? Give examples of a migrant and a mobile person.

Further reading

UN International Organization for Migration website. Here you will find information on the latest migration statistics, reports on international migration trends as well as immigration and emigration profiles of different countries. www.iom.int, see also migrationdataportal.org and <https://worldmigrationreport.iom.int/>

UNDESA website. The UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs monitors migration and publishes periodic reports. See e.g., <https://www.un.org/en/desa/international-migration-2020-highlights>

Statistics Estonia website. Among many other topics, Statistics Estonia also monitors Estonia's internal and external migration. Under the section on population, you will find information on both the demographics of the Estonian population and the migration balance. See e.g., [Migration | Statistics Estonia](#)



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2. THE HISTORY OF MIGRATION

Mari-Liis Jakobson

This chapter will provide an overview of the most important stages in the history of migration and will place modern migration in a broader context. Among other things, you will gain an understanding of migration during the Prehistoric period, Classical antiquity, Modern era and during the period of industrialisation up to the 21st century.

Migration and the possibility to migrate is undoubtedly an extremely important phenomenon in today's world. Sometimes it's even said that we live in the era of migration. However, is migration really something new and unusual?

The era of migration

In a way, the whole history of the human species is a story of migration. Like many animal and bird species, humans have been mobile for most of their history, and have only started to settle in the last millennia.

Migration has also been a key to success and formula for progress. Migration requires cooperation and communication. As human migration is not solely a routine, seasonal phenomenon like it is for many bird and animal species, it is less possible to rely on set routines. One needs to be constantly prepared to learn and adapt.

To our knowledge, the modern man, *Homo sapiens sapiens*, appeared in Africa about 200,000 years ago and at first migrated around Africa, reached the Middle East about 65,000 years ago, Europe about 55,000 years ago, Asia about 45,000 years ago, Australia about 40,000 years ago and the American [continents](#) about 10–15,000 years ago. We are gaining more knowledge on an ongoing basis, as paleoanthropologists make new discoveries and come up with new theories ([read more here](#)).

We know today that different species of hominids evolved in different parts of the world but none of them was as widespread as the *Homo sapiens sapiens*, or modern human. Paleoanthropologists have found evidence that *Homo erectus*, a species of ancient hominid, travelled outside of Africa and that the Neanderthal's ancestor *Homo heidelbergensis* is from Africa. Nevertheless, none of these species migrated as extensively and spread as successfully as *Homo sapiens sapiens*. Even Neanderthals, who lived in Europe for about 200,000 years, eventually merged with the one and only true world traveller, *Homo sapiens sapiens*. Genetics research indicates that we all have a common African ancestor, who lived about 150,000 years ago.

Migration and ancient civilisations

Humans started to settle roughly around [10,000–7,000 years ago](#), when agriculture began to develop rapidly and there was enough wealth for the first cities and civilisations to evolve. The story of migration is woven into all high cultures starting from the most ancient ones – cities that became centres of civilisation were never established by local people alone; they were always a magnet that attracted talented or enterprising people from the periphery. Diasporas, or minority communities that represent other cultures in a foreign land, are considered to date back to approximately the same time.

Trade and the exchange of cultures have never been solely based on travelling merchants, as there has always been a local diasporic support hub. Written sources show that a thousand years ago, Constantinople (today's Istanbul) was home to large communities of Babylonians, Sennarians, Medes, Jews, Persians, Egyptians and Canaanites, as well as Russians, Hungarians and Spaniards.

In addition to merchants, different missionaries and scholars have also always travelled. The famous Ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle was a metic: a foreigner who had the right to live in the Athenian city-state and the same obligations as a citizen but who lacked some of the rights of a citizen, e.g., the right to vote.

However, there is another, darker story of migration that's written in our genes. Migration has also been a side product of natural disasters and wars. In addition to the word "metic", Ancient Greeks also called foreigners "barbarians". This term denoted a foreigner who didn't speak Greek or follow the traditions of classic antiquity, and one who was usually the member of a foreign and dangerous nation that had embarked on a conquest.

One might even say that migration was the last drop that precipitated the downfall of the Roman Empire. In the 4th century, the Huns travelled from the Central Asian steppes to Eastern Europe in search of better living conditions. They, in turn, forced several Germanic and Slavic tribes to migrate further, into the territory of the Roman Empire. Today, this era is known as the Migration Period, and it led to the fall of the Roman Empire and the beginning of the so-called Dark Ages in Europe.

Migration and the Modern era

People's urge to migrate has broadened our world immeasurably, led us to new technological discoveries and brought us knowledge and goods from other cultures. There is a reason why the great explorers' journeys – such as those of Vasco Da Gama sailing around the Cape of Good Hope, Columbus arriving in America or Ferdinand Magellan famously travelling around the world – are considered the starting point of the Age of Enlightenment. There were only a handful of men on these voyages, but they opened new migration routes that are now being used by millions.

However, not everything about those travels was humanistic and enlightened. In the 16th century, after the great explorations, the arrival of the Conquistadores to Central America caused both armed conflicts as well as extensive waves of infectious diseases. In the Philippines, there is no monument to honour Magellan, who died in battle there, but to Lapulapu, the local tribal leader who put an end to his life.

Migration hasn't always been voluntary either. In 1526 – more than 400 years before the waves of deportation from Estonia – the first ship transporting slaves from Africa to the Americas arrived at the coast of modern Brazil. The first of many: it is estimated that between the 16th and 19th centuries about [12 million slaves](#) were transported from Africa to the Americas and another million or two died en route. Unfortunately, similar practices still persist. Today we call it human trafficking. This will be discussed in more detail in **Chapter 6 "Illegal Migration"**.

Migration and industrialisation

In the 19th century, when slavery was banned in the colonial empires, a different movement of people began: indentured workers. These were simple peasants, mainly from China and India, who left home for years on the promise of receiving land or a large sum of money when the contract ended. Even though they were officially free, their working and living conditions were often comparable to those of slaves. These workers were the backbone of big plantations and it was thanks to them that huge infrastructural projects were built in the Americas, Africa and Asia. Reportedly, these workers never arrived in Estonia, yet the word used for them (*kuli*) made it to the Estonian language. The word *Coolie* originally meant a slave, but later on it was used globally as a derogatory slang term for low-paid Asian labourer.

The highest known number of indentured workers – [roughly two million](#) – left India and their descendants established rather large Indian communities in areas in Southern Africa, Uganda, Kenya, Fiji and the Caribbean islands. In addition to workers from Asia, Nordic and Irish peasants went abroad based on similar contracts.

Roughly around the same time there were millions more who migrated but were somewhat freer in their decision-making. In both Europe and China, a real demographic explosion had occurred, and there wasn't enough land and food in the region for everyone. From the mid-19th century until the beginning of the Second World War, [over 55 million](#) people migrated from Europe to the New World. Around [50 million](#) people travelled from China and India to Southeast Asian countries. However, the fast growth of Northern Asian settlements also took place during this time. Millions of Chinese, some Korean and also millions of Russian people who had just been freed from serfdom migrated to Manchuria and Siberia.

Perhaps the era of most extensive migration in global history lies between the second half of the 19th century and the early 20th century, also known as the Great Migration? The migration flows at that time reached around 150 million, while the world's total population remained between one and two billion. In 2020, there were about [280 million](#) first generation migrants in the world; however, the world's population today has reached 7.6 billion.

Towards a world with borders

A few years ago, when I was flying to Southern India, the following happened to me. The plane had a layover at Bangalore airport and I was engrossed in Christian Joppke's book *Citizenship and Immigration*, when a grey-haired Indian gentleman stopped next to me and stared at my book. "How pointless!" grunted the old man. "This book is pointless. In his time, my grandfather travelled the whole world – lived in London, in the United States – without ever having a passport".

And so it was. Unlike today, when countries meticulously check who goes where, for how long and for what purpose, prior to the First World War people could move around quite freely.

A passport in the meaning of a travel document required by the destination country only came into existence during the First World War when Germany, Italy and France started requiring documents from other countries' citizens, and soon enough neutral countries followed suit. Therefore, passport checks barely date back a hundred years.

However, at the dawn of the 20th century other ideas emerged and started setting other boundaries on people's mobility. For example, at that time a pseudo-science called eugenics gained popularity. Much like today's science of genetics, eugenics was based on the presumption that people's physiological qualities derive from genes. However, unlike geneticists, eugenicists thought that the most healthy, strong and noble people are born from racial purity. Influenced by that idea, many countries started to limit the immigration of so-called racially undesirable nationalities. For example, [in 1924](#), the United States prohibited immigration from Asia and set strict immigration quotas on Eastern Europeans, including Estonians, who were considered to be inferior.

This of course didn't mean that immigrants were treated with more tolerance prior to this – racial discrimination and exclusion, in the labour market for example, was more common in many places than it is today. Still, the restrictions that countries set on migration were more lenient.

Nevertheless, this didn't mean that migration stopped after the First World War. Quite the contrary. The fact that roughly 20 million people were killed in the war meant that there weren't enough workers and once again many European and American countries contributed to labour migration. It's worth noting that even Nazi Germany, which preached racial purity, had about [7.5 million](#) foreign workers towards the end of the 1930s.

Migration after the Second World War

The period between the world wars and the Second World War itself brought the topic of forced migration into international politics, which we have covered in detail in **Chapter 7 "Refugees and Asylum"**. It is estimated that the Second World War displaced about [175 million](#) people, including 40 million international refugees within Europe. The Second World War also led to the establishment of a bipolar world order, which shattered the remaining hope of restoring a peaceful world with free borders. However, there are some regional exceptions. For instance, the predecessor of the European Union, the European Economic Community, started drafting the regulation on the free movement of workers with the Treaty of Paris in 1951, even though it was only fully implemented in 1968. Of course, there was still a long way to go before the fully free movement of European Union citizens, which was solidified with the Maastricht Treaty in 1992.

The robust economic growth in the years following the war coupled with labour force shortages encouraged countries to experiment with their migration policies. For instance, in the United States the Bracero programme was initiated, which enabled Mexicans to go and work in the US as short-term workers. In the 1950s and 1960s, many Western European countries, such as Western Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium and the Nordic countries started guest worker programmes. This facilitated the recruitment of workers with low or intermediate level qualifications from different countries of the Mediterranean region (e.g., Turkey, Yugoslavia, Morocco, Tunisia, Greece). Although the original purpose was to foster short-term work-related mobility, so that people would work in Western Europe for a short period of time and then return to their country of origin, many guest workers became long-term residents, who were so essential to their employers that their work and living permits were consistently extended. In the 1970s, when the world was hit by economic recession, the guest worker programmes in Europe were terminated (in the US the Bracero programme had already been terminated in 1960). At that time, states realised that there were no short-term workers with 20 years of tenure in the country, and those who had the right to stay also brought along their families. Instead of decreasing, migration started growing under the new, more restrictive policy. Migration policies and their dysfunctions are discussed in detail in **Chapter 4 "Migration Policy"**.

Migration in the 21st century

The 21st century has created many prerequisites for migration to pick up again. The fall of the Iron Curtain resulted in the increase of mobility between East and West. There is also migratory pressure from the South to the North, even though countries endeavour to control it with migration restrictions. Different new technologies and business models have probably contributed the most to the transformation of migration. Low-cost airlines, the internet and cable television allow us to figuratively be in multiple places at once and to discover the world in a different manner. Perhaps the current period could be named the era of mobility – although the ratio of migrants in today's world is much smaller than a century ago, they are much more mobile and they have a much stronger connection with their homeland.

It's hard to say what future migration will look like. There are a plethora of prognoses, both utopian and dystopian. Inspired by the coronavirus pandemic, there are prognoses of a world in lockdown (to many people), where the possibilities of migrating will decrease, but also forecasts of increasing migration. That type of migration, is another topic. The American migration researcher [Douglas Massey](#) has predicted that in the 21st century the main type of migration will be forced migration, meaning that people won't mainly migrate to fulfil the needs of the labour market but instead to escape conflict or humanitarian crises. It is rather likely that technology will play an increasingly important role in enabling people's movement and in tracking them.

It is predicted that increasing inequality – both between and within countries – may increase migration further, but there are also prognoses, which indicate that global inequality is in fact diminishing. Another reason which might induce migration could be climate change. There are more details on this in **Chapter 12 "Climate Migration"**. The demand for a foreign workforce may also be increased by the decreasing birth rate and the reversal of the population pyramid in many developed countries. At the same time, the demand for workers may also decrease due to automation, and population growth in the upcoming decades will most likely stop in countries where it is currently growing. Statistician Hans Rosling has estimated that "[peak child](#)" has already been reached, and it is estimated that the global population might start to decrease instead from mid-21st century.

However, it is certain that while most of the world's population will remain settled, there will also be a minority more open to taking risks and one that is prepared to seek a new life across borders.

Discussion points

- Discuss which era would you consider to be the most prominent era of migration and why? The Prehistoric period, the age of ancient civilisations, the Age of Exploration, the second half of the 19th century or today?
- How do you think migration today differs from migration in the second half of the 19th century or early 20th century?

Further reading

King, R. (2007) *An Atlas of Human Migration*. New Burlington: New Burlington Books

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Torpey, J. C. (2018). *The invention of the passport: Surveillance, citizenship and the state*. Cambridge University Press.



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3. WHY DO PEOPLE MIGRATE?

Mari-Liis Jakobson

This chapter introduces theories of migration – patterns that researchers have discovered in human migration. We will explore the reasons why some people decide to migrate while most people do not, examine the push and pull factors that affect migration, and try to understand how the migration decision is born.

Every day, thousands of people around the world pack their bags and go abroad in search of a better future. Why are they doing this? On the one hand, each migrant has his or her own migration story and personal reasons. On the other hand, researchers have identified several patterns that help us understand why people migrate. These have been written down as various migration theories. Let's take a closer look at them now.

Migration as a rational decision

Perhaps we could start by responding to the question of why most people do not undertake an international migration journey. Although there are hundreds of millions of people in the world living in a country other than their country of birth, they constitute less than [4%](#) of the world's population. Even in the European Union, where moving from one country to another is not restricted for citizens, less than [4%](#) of the population lives in a Member State other than their country of birth. How to explain that?

In fact, migration is an inconvenient and often quite risky process. And although nowadays travelling is not usually a life-threatening experience, it is still somewhat stressful. You have to adapt to a new linguistic and cultural environment, where there may be less support from friends or family, and often a lot of bureaucracy.

Economists (such as Larry A. Sjaastad in his 1962 article "The Costs and Returns of Human Migration") have compared migration with an investment: people migrate to increase the productivity of their human capital, that is, their knowledge, skills or simply manpower. Migration usually takes place when there is hope that the investment that is made through migration is cost-effective. This is why predominantly young people migrate because their cost-benefit calculation returns are positive in the long run, and mostly those whose profitability of human capital increases more as a result of migration.

In other words, according to this theory, migration is a rational choice. Of course, not everyone calculates only economic costs and benefits. Migration research shows that even if these calculations are made at first, people often do not have complete information about the conditions in the country of destination or about all the costs related to migration. There are also things that are difficult to directly convert into money. For example, the Swiss sociologist Hans-Joachim Hoffmann-Nowotny has pointed out that in addition to economic profitability, individuals also consider social power and prestige to be important. And because this is something that is harder to achieve abroad, people do not necessarily embark on a migratory journey, even if it would be economically beneficial. Furthermore, personal factors are also certainly important: an individual has to be sufficiently adaptable, with a high risk-bearing capacity, so that different people's emotional cost and benefits calculation should look quite different.

How do immigration and emigration countries emerge?

Another question that migration researchers have been looking to answer is why some countries become emigration countries and others immigration countries.

Several researchers have tried to explain the direction of migration, but one of the most widespread ones is the theory of migration push and pull factors published in 1966 by the American demographer Everett S. Lee. The push factors are the reasons that make us consider leaving: for example, military conflict or insecurity, persecution, lack of jobs or simply relative poverty. The pull factors consist of everything that makes a migration destination attractive: desirable jobs, access to land (in the past), higher wages, education that provides better opportunities and cultural or political freedom. People can be driven by both push and pull factors, often both together. Various intervening obstacles can also change migration plans.

The push and pull theory explains why migration is directed mostly from poor and developing countries to richer and developed countries. It is often described as migration from the Global South to the Global North. However, the theory of pull and push factors, together with the principle of investment, also helps us to understand why a very large proportion of migration takes place on a much smaller scale and, above all, within the so-called Global South. Migration is an expensive undertaking, especially for people in developing countries. As a result, people fleeing conflict, for example, often end up in less prosperous neighbourhoods: the push factors do not allow them to stay home, and even if the pull factors are not exactly strong in a neighbouring country, life there is better than remaining in the country of origin.

However, demographers have provided another interesting explanation for the direction and causes of migration. In 1971, Wilbur Zelinsky published a model for mobility transition that explains emigration from developing countries. Migration is intensifying in countries that are modernising, have high birth rates and increasing life expectancy. Everyone might not find work, so some young people have to undertake the migration journey. Nowadays, we see this situation in many African countries, as well as in many Asian countries. However, 100–150 years ago, most European countries, including Estonia, were in this situation. And so it happened that many siblings from one family went to Russia to acquire new land. By the way, relative prosperity is important not only for raising large migration cohorts but also for sending them on their way, because migration usually comes with an initial investment.

Nonetheless, this theory is somewhat overly one-dimensional in providing a true overview of migration. Sometimes emigration from such countries continues even after the demographic balance has been reached, and the population in the country of origin may even begin to shrink. This is so-called chain migration, where initial migrants who were forced to leave in search of better jobs also bring along their families, or many others follow, as the economy of the country of origin has shrunk due to rapid emigration and the local market and employment opportunities have dwindled.

What are migration networks and how do they explain migration trends?

Migration research has also shown a trend that is not very rational: why is it that many migrants from a few countries usually arrive in one destination country, but only a few people arrive from very many countries? This can be partly explained by migration treaties between countries. For example, in the 1950s and 1960s, the Turks came to several Western European countries as guest workers under international agreements. There was a similar arrangement in place in several countries for nurses from the Philippines, for example.

But how can we explain, for example, that the trading city of Guangzhou in Southern China suddenly saw the emergence of a community of Nigerians of almost hundreds of thousands of people? There has been no migration treaties between the two countries, and no Chinese company has run major recruitment campaigns in Nigeria. These two countries do not have any common history either.

The migration network theory will provide an answer. Migration costs and stress can be significantly reduced if there are already fellow nationals ahead in the host country, someone who can provide information on life and migration opportunities, perhaps even provide accommodation at the beginning, help you find a job and make things easier. This network is not always made up of people who are relatives or friends. The networks often include professional intermediaries: recruiting agents, employment agencies, removal service providers and many others. For example, when labour migration from Ukraine to Estonia began to grow rapidly, one low-cost airline launched an affordable Tallinn-Kyiv route, which further increased the attractiveness of Estonia as a destination. As the émigré community grows, there will also be on-site service providers, who in turn will connect the network: small shopkeepers who sell special groceries and consumer goods from the home country, restaurateurs, hairdressers or doctors with whom migrants can communicate in the same way as in the home country and so on.

However, the growth of such emigrant communities will not last forever. Migration networks also have their saturation point up to which the communities grow and after that, they start to shrink. Why so? On the one hand, there may be a change in public policy in the country. For example, the number of Africans in Guangzhou fell to almost nothing in mid-2010s, as the country began to significantly restrict immigration from Nigeria; and those who had already arrived were not exactly treated with affection.

However, policy changes may not always be the reason. For example, when Germany closed its borders to Turkish migrant workers in the 1970s, migration from Turkey increased. It happened because the ones who were already in Germany decided to bring their family members along using the right of family reunification.

But in some cases, there is a natural slow-down or even decline in growth. On the one hand, the decline repulsive of immigrant communities can be explained by the effect of push and pull factors: for example, the standard of living in Estonia and Finland is no longer as different as it was 10 or 20 years ago; therefore, migration to Finland has decreased and return increased. However, the network theory states that the network itself also plays a role. Over time, migrant communities may become less hospitable towards new arrivals – especially if they have come under criticism in the host society. Confrontation between "newcomers" and "old-timers" of the same origin, who already see life through a prism more similar to the locals, may occur. The "old-timers" may be wary of reputation damages or simply of the responsibilities that come with networks. Over time, migration networks will begin to disintegrate: the interest of professional intermediaries will disappear and those who remain will integrate into the host society.

How is a migration decision made?

Migration researchers have also tried to understand how people migrate. Today, the migration process is often gradual. In most cases, no one thinks "Goodbye, homeland. I'm never coming back!" People leave for a limited time at first – a few months, a year, until the end of their studies, to see how life abroad suits them. However, quite often a short visit lasts longer and soon people become visitors in their country of origin.

It is also interesting to note that people often settle abroad for other reasons than their original reason for migration. This is particularly true of young people's migration. If the initial reason was to go to study or earn money, then the reason to stay is because of a more general social context, for example, the openness of the society. Interviews with young people from Estonia who have moved to major metropolises also suggest that although many have Estonia in their heart and wish to return home someday, it is often impeded by a few reasons. First, their area or professional specialisation is so narrow that there is simply not enough work in Estonia, and second, there are no comparable culture consumption opportunities in Estonia.

But of course, not everyone moves as freely as young people. German economist Oded Stark has developed the New Economics of Labour Migration (NELM) theory, which explains that a migration decision is often not an individual decision but rather a collective one, such as a household decision. Even if only one household member actually migrates, the whole household is involved in the migration process. The migration investment is not necessarily made only by the person who moves, but also by the family members who support the decision.

For example, if one spouse goes abroad to work, it means that the other spouse has to take more responsibility for the household – he or she will also experience migration-related stress even without moving. Therefore, it is important to consider the costs and benefits of migration from the perspective of the whole family. Does the relative welfare gain from migration, for example the purpose to make repairs at home and buy another car, outweigh the risks and temporary inconvenience brought about by the migration of a family member? Certainly, other formulas can be considered: perhaps chain migration is more beneficial, which means bringing the family abroad later on. Needless to say, this is also a decision that needs to be carefully considered, for example in terms of the cost of living and economic well-being and regarding the challenges of integration. However, migration policies also play a role – if the host country were to make migration regulation more restrictive, a wave of chain migration would likely follow, i.e., families would join the migrant in the destination country because it would no longer be easy for him/her to visit the family. However, people often prefer the circular migration solution, where one family member occasionally goes abroad to work and sends money home, and the other family members adjust their living arrangements accordingly.

To conclude, migration happens because of many different factors at the societal, community and individual levels. Migration can be a forced choice or part of a rewarding lifestyle. It can turn a person into a cosmopolitan globetrotter who enjoys the new adventures and exciting discoveries that a new destination country offers. However, people can also become trapped in migration when it turns out that what was initially promised or hoped will not become a reality, and there are few opportunities to move back or onwards.

Discussion points

- Tell someone's real migration story or invent your own story (who migrated from where to where and for what reasons) and discuss it based on the theories introduced in the chapter: to what extent is the migration decision related to an economic cost-benefit calculation, pull and push factors, mobility transition and networks? Was it an individual or collective decision?
- Discuss to what extent migration is rational and to what extent irrational.

Further reading

A more in-depth academic overview of **migration theories** can be found here, c.f.: [Hagen-Zanker, J. \(2008\) Why do people migrate? A review of the theoretical literature. MPRA Paper no 28197](#)

An interesting podcast about migration by the International Migration Research Network: [IMISCOE taskuhäälingu sarjast.](#)

Brettell, C. B., & Hollifield, J. F. (Eds.). (2014). *Migration theory: Talking across disciplines*. London; New York: Routledge.



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4. MIGRATION POLICY: WHY AND HOW DO COUNTRIES REGULATE MIGRATION?

Mari-Liis Jakobson

In this chapter, we will discuss why countries regulate migration. In order to achieve their objectives, countries often have to manage completely opposite processes at the same time: simultaneously limit migration and attract those whom the country needs. How are countries doing this and how well are they managing it?

Migration policy is a set of objectives, rules and actions that public authorities, sometimes in cooperation with NGOs or the private sector, implement to manage migration. When people hear the words "migration" and "policy", an image of politicians arguing, making promises to voters or criticising their opponents might come to mind. Politicians are indeed involved in shaping migration policy but, here we mainly focus on the substance of migration policies: rules and regulations that are used to steer migration in one direction or another.

The key questions for migration policy are: who do we want here, how many and for what purpose? Should migration be restricted at all? Recently policymakers around the world are tending to answer this question in the affirmative. However, the questions of who, how many and for what are extremely topical.

Types of migration

Migration can be divided into four major categories based on purpose: labour and business migration, student migration, family migration and forced migration, where people escape from conflict or persecution. **Chapter 7** focuses on refugees and asylum seekers; therefore, we will now concentrate on regulations and the goals of other types of migration.

Labour migration

Most often, migration policy focuses on economic objectives. For example, there may be a labour shortage in a country. Labour shortages can be general or structural. A general labour shortage means that more workers are needed than there are people who are able to work in the country. Structural labour shortages mean that there is a shortage of people with the right qualifications for a particular job, or that locals no longer want to do certain jobs themselves. The latter are often known as the 3D jobs: work that is dirty, dangerous and demeaning. In that case, the aim of migration policy is to find people to do these jobs from abroad.

Skilled migrants

However, sometimes migration is not seen as the solution to a problem, but rather as an opportunity to gain an advantage over others. What if we could attract the brightest minds and entrepreneurs to the country? Then there would be jobs for everyone, the economy would grow and the state's revenues would increase, which in turn could benefit the society as a whole. To this end, various talent attraction and retention measures are developed. The key question at the heart of these policies is: who is a talent? A talent is not just a gifted person, but rather a highly skilled professional and/or entrepreneur who don't just master complex tasks, but whose jobs can create jobs also for others. For instance, a highly skilled programmer is vital for establishing a start-up company that can create hundreds of jobs in the future. Or a designer that establishes starts running a successful fashion brand. Or a civil engineer thanks to whom dozens of local builders find work with higher added value.

Attracting such talents is a separate challenge. In a situation where all the developed economies of the world are competing for talents, a country has to come up with something that will make them more attractive than others. It can be anything from generous residence permit conditions, a stimulating environment, high wages, a great reputation to a good environment for starting a business. The attractiveness of countries for global talent is measured using the [Global Talent Competitiveness Index](#), for example.

Student migration

Student migration means a situation whereby a foreign national arrives in a country to study – for example, to study for a university degree or learn a trade in a vocational school. Sometimes they might arrive as exchange students to study at a school or university for a shorter period of time, or just take for a language course – this is often referred to as learning mobility. There are many reasons why countries favour that type of migration. Student migration is often seen as an extension of talent migration – today's talented student is tomorrow's highly qualified worker! In addition, during their studies, the person already adapts to the society of the destination country and is therefore also better integrated. Many countries engage in efforts to attract talented students – for example, advertising the curricula or the country as a destination in general, and/or offering free study opportunities or considerable scholarships. On the other hand, efforts are also made to retain international alumni, such as by organising career fairs to integrate students smoothly into the labour market, allowing them to look for work or start a business after graduation, or permitting them to return more easily in the future compared to other migrants.

Student migration can also serve a completely different purpose. Offering higher education to international students can also be a profitable business. Universities may offer degree programmes to international students also in fields where there is no labour shortage in the host country, for a fee. Income from international student fees is another source of revenue for the universities, which can be used to provide better education to its students or carry out high-level research that the society of the host country needs. Likewise, for an international student, a diploma from a prestigious university and a good level of education with experience of living abroad can be a good starting platform after returning to their home country or for launching an international career. In addition, an international alumnus who has had a positive experience in the host country during their studies also remains a kind of goodwill ambassador or business card for the host country. Perhaps he/she has established contacts during his/her studies, which will ensure necessary business ties or even diplomatic contacts in the future.

Family migration

Family migration refers to people who migrate due to new or established family ties with the host country's citizen or a foreign national already living there. For example, a family migrant is a foreign national who comes to Estonia to marry an Estonian citizen, or the children of a foreign national who come to Estonia because their parent has migrated to Estonia for work. Countries primarily allow family migration on humanitarian grounds – the right to family life is already enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. However, sometimes the possibility to easily migrate together with one's family is also a bonus to attracting highly qualified migrants.

At the same time, national rules vary considerably, e.g., when a family can reunite with a family member who migrated earlier, whether it can be done immediately or only if the migrant is already settled. Countries also have different rules as to who is considered a family member – in some countries, family reunification rights are reserved only to the closest family members such as a spouse and children, in others also to extended family members, for example, to the parents of an adult migrant or their adult siblings.

Methods of migration regulation

Thus, states must manage different migration flows simultaneously, and simultaneously bear in mind the specific national needs and objectives as well as the particularities of migration processes, which were discussed in **Chapter 3**. Figuratively speaking, a country is like a land developer or irrigator who by constructing dams and drainage ditches hopes to divert water in such a way that one place has sufficient water and other places are not flooded, at the same time building a water pipeline to supply residents with drinking water with much better quality ...

Taking all these considerations into account, states are developing different migration schemes with surgical precision – different migration groups are differentiated and, if necessary, categories fall under different rules. For example, the United States has created dozens of statuses for people who want to go there. Navigating between different schemes can be quite difficult, but it gives the state more leverage. For example, when the labour needs of a sector change, there is no need to redesign the whole system or deal with associated effects.

States also have different levers to limit migration. To put it simply, we can distinguish between the quota method that is state-centric; the labour market control method that focuses on the employer; and the points method that is migrant-centric.

Quota method

The simplest immigration capping measure is a quota – it means setting a specific limit for a certain type of visa. For example, we decide that our quota is one hundred supermodels a year, and to the one hundred and first supermodel we politely say that no more are needed, please try again next year.

On the other hand, of course, it can be argued that there is no one right number, as it all depends on demand. For example, it could happen that only ten supermodels are needed in a given year, but

then several reputable fashion houses expand and suddenly 150 new models are needed. The solution here is either a more flexible quota method – for example, the state sets a new quota every year based on labour market needs – or a labour market control method.

Labour market control method

The labour market control method does not set a numerical quota but allows all foreign nationals for whom there is a demand in the labour market to enter.

How we assess the needs of the labour market is a separate question. If we rely only on the fact that a person has an employment contract, it may happen that a foreign worker, who is ready to work upon terms that are more favourable for the employer than a local, will be preferred. In many countries, this is solved by a method called the labour market needs test: a worker can only be brought in from abroad if a suitable candidate cannot be found in-country. The labour market test can be utilised, for example, by an unemployment fund: an entrepreneur who wants to bring in a worker from abroad must first ask the unemployment fund if they have any suitable candidates who are already residing in the country.

Salary criteria

Another fear associated with labour migration is that cheap foreign labour will suddenly drive down local wages. To avoid this, it is possible to establish wage criteria: for example, a wage minimum that foreign migrants may be paid. The wage criterion is used in both quota and labour market control systems. For example, an employer may need to pay to a foreign worker at least the average salary of the sector. Of course, the salary criteria can also create a paradoxical situation whereby a foreign national receives a higher salary than locals working in the same company. However, we could look at the big picture and ask whether the company's work processes and pricing policy are optimal. Sometimes, the situation can be justified: the foreign national might be able to add more value either through their skills, productivity or simply by maintaining the production process and preserving local jobs.

Points method

Some countries, such as Australia and Canada, use a third system: the points-based method. (In some countries, the points-based method is used only for certain categories of migrants, such as in the context of talent migration.) The points method does not seek to determine how many super-models are needed at present but instead lets everyone in who could have the potential to advance the life and economy of the destination country. Each criterion that is considered important is allotted points and a threshold is set. Points may be awarded to a person wishing to immigrate based on their language skills, education, profession and work experience. For example, if you are a data analyst with a PhD, you get enough points in the education and specialisation categories to pass the threshold. You do not need anything else – the borders are open for you. However, if you only have a vocational degree, then you need to be proficient in the local language and have an employment contract with a local company to earn enough points to pass the threshold.

Countries apply different rules to different migration groups, and it can also happen that a country uses different methods for different groups. For example, there is a quota for workers in certain sectors, some residence permits can be applied for through the points-based system and others are based on the labour market control method. And sometimes these two layers are applied simultaneously: a points-based system exists but there is a cap on the number of people receive a residence permit based on it; or there is a quota system, where the precondition of fulfilling the quota conditions is a labour market needs test, as in Estonia (more about this in detail in **chapter 5**). If the points-based system is used, the labour market sector where the person wants to enter often plays a role so, in this way, it is similar to the labour market control method.

How long can you stay in the country?

Another question that countries have to decide on in regard to migration is how long a migrant can stay in the country. Some countries, such as [Canada](#) and [Australia](#), allow some highly qualified professionals or migrants who want to move to sparsely populated states to apply for a lifetime residence permit upon arrival. Others, such as [European Union](#) member states, usually issue a temporary residence permit for up to five years, which can be renewed later if the foreign national wants to stay longer and he/she is still needed in the labour market.

Seasonal employment

Sometimes, short-term migration or circular migration is preferred for certain migration groups. For instance, most EU countries allow non-EU or third-country nationals to enter the EU for seasonal work for six to nine months after which they have to return to their home country. After a few months, they are eligible return to work again in EU countries. The purpose of this scheme is to allow labour to be brought in from abroad to sectors such as agriculture or tourism, where a large amount of relatively low-skilled labour is needed during certain high seasons. The seasonal work scheme seeks to prevent unskilled migrants from settling permanently with their families in a place where the sector's relatively low wages would condemn them to poverty risk. At the same time, working in a country with higher wages may allow them to earn a sufficient amount of money during the season to return home for the remaining months and even improve their standard of living in their country of origin, and by doing so stimulate their local economy. Thus, seasonal work can be even be considered as sort of a development cooperation tool.

Migration policy as a failed policy?

Most developed countries have the following policies in place in parallel:

a labour migration policy to cover certain labour market needs, which can also be a channel for permanent immigration in the long run

short-term labour migration or circular migration policy to cover the need for unskilled seasonal work, which usually does not lead to permanent immigration

talent migration policy, which seeks to attract highly skilled and highly paid top specialists and entrepreneurs – who often enjoy more lenient immigration rules and have good prospects to settle more permanently

student migration, which may be aimed at attracting students as future talents to study and later to settle in the country, or at exporting higher education, i.e., students are invited to come to the country for studying and after graduation they have to leave

family migration policy, which defines whether a labour or study migrant can bring along their family members for a short or long period of time

an asylum policy that sets out the conditions under which the people whose life in their home country has become untenable for some reason may remain in the host country.

One can argue that everything covered in this chapter is perfect only on paper. Migration researchers sometimes say that there is no other sectoral policy that fails as often as migration policy. A country may have very specific goals that their migration policy seeks to achieve, as well as very smart measures to ensure that only the people they want arrive and not the ones they don't want, but, as has been said, it is quite difficult to work as a land developer or irrigator, with some areas to drain and some areas to irrigate, while also trying to build a drinking water system. It can easily happen that a person who seems to perfectly fit the description of the desired talent on paper is a non-cooperative sociopath in real life, who ultimately does not fit into any collective. It can happen that a person will only work for the company that hired them until their permanent residence permit is approved, after which he or she will rely on unemployment benefits. Or a student we see as a recipient of higher education export is not really interested in obtaining a diploma and returning home, but sees student migration as a window of opportunity to become a low-skilled labour migrant and escape conflict in their country of origin. There are also cases where attempts are made to take advantage of the family migration system by entering into sham marriages. It can also happen that a country spends a lot of money to advertise itself as an attractive destination for top professionals but highly skilled or entrepreneurial migrants are not interested in migrating to that particular country.

Thus, migration policy is a set of goals that seek to facilitate or restrict migration and regulations that seek to achieve those goals, but it also has to account for the logic of migration processes, human intelligence and thousands of other details that still need to be taken into account when running the system.

Discussion points

- You are a policymaker in your country and you have been approached by IT entrepreneurs who complain that they are no longer able to expand their businesses because there are not enough IT professionals in the country. The options on the table are to facilitate the immigration of IT professionals or to move some of the high-paying jobs to branches in other countries. What are the pros and cons of each option for your country? What migration policy would you design to address the concerns of IT entrepreneurs and why?
- Discuss the benefits or disadvantages of a liberal student migration policy for a country. What do you think would be the optimal student migration policy?

Further reading

The Estonian Human Development Report published in 2017 includes chapters on migration policy and migration in general: www.2017.inimareng.ee/en/

The European Migration Network monitors the developments of the migration policy of both Estonia and other European Union member states. www.emn.ee

How attractive is Estonia or any other country to global talents and why (not)? You can find the answers in the Global Talent Competitiveness Index: <https://www.insead.edu/global-indices>



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5. HOW DOES ESTONIA REGULATE MIGRATION?

Mari-Liis Jakobson

This is a continuation of the chapter on migration policy and explains which migration policies Estonia is implementing. We will talk about how Estonia regulates labour, family and study migration, as well as the reasons for these rules. In other words, how past experiences, present needs and visions of the future affect our migration policy.

If you want to understand the country's migration policy, you have to look at the past, the present and the future plans. Estonian migration policy has been significantly affected by Soviet-era experiences, but our migration policy has also been greatly influenced by the lack of a workforce, which is especially felt during periods of economic growth. Yet Estonia's image as a digital state and its desire to become an attractive destination for high-value companies has also had a clear impact.

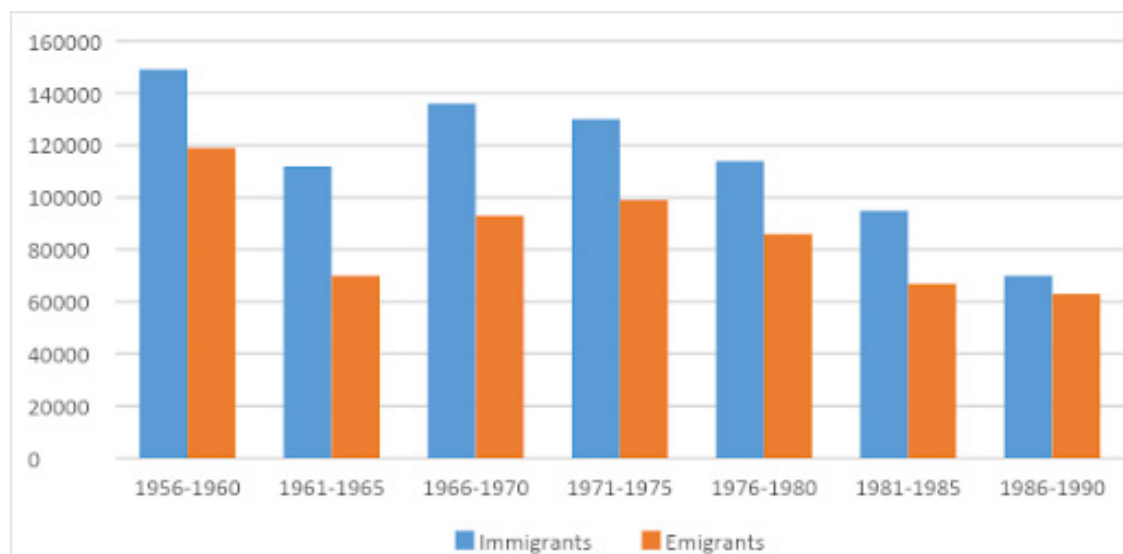
The legacy of the Soviet era in Estonian politics

At a time when many Western countries were beginning to experiment with their migration policies, Estonia was part of the Soviet Union and felt the impacts of Moscow's migration experiments. On paper, Estonia was a sovereign federal republic, but in fact, decisions concerning migration, for example, were still made far away in Moscow.

Unlike in the EU, where people can move between member states freely and according to their preferences, the Soviet-era movement was largely state-led: people who came to Estonia from other Soviet republics were assigned to work here, which means they may not have had the slightest idea of what Estonia is, and no desire to adapt to the local context.

Migration was significantly influenced by two policies: on the one hand, large factories and infrastructure projects recruiting workers from other federal republics, and on the other hand, the dream of a so-called *homo Sovieticus* (Soviet man), a Russian-speaking builder of Communism who is loyal to the Soviet regime and has cast off the yoke of national history.

By the end of the Soviet era, about [half a million people](#) had immigrated to Estonia in this way (though 350,000 of them emigrated again later) and they were mostly ethnic Russians. While more than 90% of the Estonian population was Estonian at the beginning of the 1940s, by 1990, i.e., just before Estonian independence, only 61% of the [population](#) was Estonian. There are various reasons for this. First, the Estonian population decreased during the war due to the number of war casualties, refugees, the departure of Baltic Germans, deportees and the repressed. Also, the period of rapid growth of the Estonian population had already ended by the time the Soviet powers arrived, while in several other regions of the Soviet Union it was still ongoing and there were many people at a suitable age for migration.



Immigrants from other Soviet republics into Estonia 1956–1990

Thus, due to the Soviet time experiences, Estonia has become subconsciously wary of immigration as a means of repatriation, and there is a great fear that it may get out of our control again and be managed from somewhere further away.

Immigration quota

Probably the same fears, but also the desire to control migration processes and build a nation-state, were behind the fact that newly independent Estonia's migration policy became quite conservative. When Estonia became independent and was drafting the Aliens Act in 1993, the term immigration quota was introduced.

It was stipulated that the number of residence permits issued to aliens in one year may not exceed a limit, which is equal to 0.1% of the permanent population of Estonia. In other words, if one and a half million people lived in Estonia, no more than 1,500 foreigners could settle here annually. The quota has been changed – for a while it was reduced to 0.05%, and later brought back to 0.1%. As of 2021, it was at 0.1%, or 1,315 people a year.

This is, in fact, a rather rare method in migration policy, and in most cases, the volume of migration is not fixed so categorically. In Bulgaria, for example, there is a quota for work permits for foreigners, and the extent of the quota is determined by a special council based on the workforce currently required (labour demand forecasts). For example, in 2017 the quota was set at 9,000 permits, while in 2020 the quota was already over 100,000.

It is true that over time exceptions have also been made to the Estonian immigration quota. Some of them were the result of international agreements – for example, since the 1990s, US and Japanese citizens are not limited by the quota. Later, family migration was also excluded from the quota because the fulfilment of the quota is not sufficient justification to prevent the right to family reunification. Also excluded from the quota are the student migrants and several specialists with higher

added value, such as top specialists who are paid at least twice the Estonian average salary, start-up entrepreneurs and employees, ICT specialists and researchers. The current list of exceptions can be found in §115 of the [Aliens Act](#).

Salary criterion

Additionally, Estonia has tried to avoid the introduction of low-paid labour. For this purpose, a salary criterion has been established for labour migration, which as of 2021 was equal to the official average gross monthly salary in Estonia. The salary requirement should ensure that we get more foreign added-value professionals, who do not fall into the trap of low income and therefore have better prospects for societal integration. Bringing such an employee to Estonia could also benefit Estonian society at large, as a higher-paid employee also pays more taxes to the state. And since the employee's residence permit depends on the salary information received by the Tax and Customs Board, the chances of tax evasion are also eliminated.

In fact, there are some exceptions to the salary criterion, such as foreigners working in the performing arts (ballerinas, opera singers, actors, directors, musicians), researchers, clergy, athletes and foreign nationals working on youth projects. The purpose of these exceptions is to allow the involvement of foreign labour in sectors where the average wage is lower, but in which the involvement of foreigners would provide great added value. At the same time, many of the aforementioned groups (for example, employees of performing arts institutions) are still limited by the immigration quota, which confines the possibilities of inviting them to Estonia for a longer period.

Focus on attracting highly-qualified immigrants

In recent years, there have been experiments with various measures to attract potential added value migrants to Estonia. Estonia is advertised as an attractive place to work and live, especially to ICT specialists and engineers, start-up entrepreneurs and international students. For example, the Work in Estonia programme supports ICT companies recruiting from abroad, and the Study in Estonia programme supports universities in marketing their curricula abroad. A separate Startup Estonia programme is designed to attract start-ups and keep them here. Through Startup Estonia, it is also possible to apply for a visa or residence permit specifically for start-ups. To do this, applicants must at least have a ready-made prototype or an existing company that hopes to expand abroad. And before starting the residence permit or visa procedure, the applications are evaluated by a committee of experts. The Estonian method is remarkable because the applicant can take along his/her entire team.

Additionally, Estonia issues a digital nomad visa. A digital nomad is a person who works remotely and offers his/her products or services through ICT solutions. Unlike, for example, an employee of a start-up company, it is not assumed that the digital nomad works for a company registered in Estonia. In other words, Estonia also enables, for example, a visa for an Armenian web designer whose one-man company offers services mainly to clients in the EU. Though he lives and works mainly in Armenia, he can open a bank account for his company in Estonia, use the Estonian e-government services as an e-resident and if necessary conveniently travel through Estonia to meet his clients elsewhere in Europe.

If we look at the statistics, it can be said that Estonia's current policy to contribute to higher added value labour migration is gradually bearing fruit. For example, in 2020, top specialists earning at least twice the Estonian average salary already accounted for almost a fifth of all those who received a work residence permit, and more than a tenth of the migrants came to work in Estonian start-ups. They are joined by those visa applicants who come for a shorter period and are just starting a business in Estonia.

Esmakordsed tähtajalised elamisload töötamiseks, töötamise liikide lõikes (2018-2020)

Tööränne	2018	2019	2020
Üldkorras	1224	1283	1256
Tippspetsialist	228	390	384
Iduettevõttes töötamine	186	315	232
Ekspert/nõustaja/konsultant	58	78	53
Teaduslik tegevus/õppejõud	40	42	36
Eraõigusliku juriidilise isiku juhtorgani liige	37	26	33
Sportlane/treener/kohtunik	21	10	18
EL sinine kaart	19	19	9
Vaimulik/munk/nunn	18	16	22
Loominguline töötaja	11	7	12
Õpetaja	7	15	12
Muu	2	17	22
KOKKU	1851	2218	2089

Allikas: Politsei- ja Piirivalveamet

Short-term mobility to alleviate labour shortages

On the other hand, the field of labour migration has also experienced growing labour shortages during the period of economic growth. To meet the needs of employers, in many labour-intensive sectors where wages are high enough, such as construction, the demand for workforce has also been eased by issuing work visas. For example, an alien can apply for a long-term visa and come to work in Estonia for up to a year. But in essence, it is possible to also work on a three-month Schengen visa or work without a visa when coming to Estonia from countries with which Estonia has visa-free travel. It suffices if the employer registers the short-term employment in the respective register. When the visa or visa-free stay period ends, one must return to their home country and stay there for the prescribed period – at least half a year in the case of an annual visa – before regaining the right to work in Estonia again. And this, of course, again for at least the average salary in Estonia.

Although this arrangement is perhaps not the most convenient for the employer – because employees need to be constantly rotated due to the duration of the visa – this scheme seeks to encourage circular migration: for example, instead of moving here with their whole family, one family member goes to work in Estonia intermittently, and takes the earned wages largely back to his/her home country, boosting the economy there.

In addition, foreigners can also work in Estonia as seasonal workers, for up to nine months, after which they have to leave the EU for at least three months. For example, a seasonal worker can work in agricultural, fishing, catering and accommodation companies. The most important difference to other visa-based workers is that seasonal workers are not required to receive an average wage: they must only be paid above the minimum wage. However, in addition to the salary, the employer must also cover the costs related to the reception and accommodation of the seasonal worker. Thus, in principle, certain sectors are allowed lower-paid and lower-skilled workers. The list of sectors which can employ seasonal workers is established by a regulation of the Minister of the Interior.

Lühiajalise töötamise registreerimiste arv (2016–2020)



Allikas: Politsei- ja Piirivalveamet

Family migration

As part of family migration, only the spouse and minor children of an Estonian citizen or an alien holding an Estonian residence permit can come to live in Estonia. In exceptional cases, this circle may be wider – for example, to include the spouse's parents or adult children if they need constant care due to a disability or medical condition and will otherwise no longer have a carer in their home country. For a family migrant to come to Estonia, the inviter must have sufficient income to cover the expenses necessary to support all the invited family members and must have lodging where they can settle. Family migrants are also checked to ascertain whether the family relations are genuine or whether the invitees pose a risk to public order.

Esmakordsed tähtajalised elamisload ja elamisõigused rändeliikide lõikes (2016–2020)

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Esmakordsed elamisload kokku	3780	3995	4912	5984	4710
Pereränne (abikaasa juurde ja lähedase sugulase juurde kokku)	1233	1184	1661	2272	1958
Elamisluba õppimiseks	1160	1211	1267	1330	533
Töötamine	1325	1501	1851	2218	2089
Elamisluba ettevõtluseks	16	53	87	134	111
EL kodanike pereliikmed*	35	42	57	82	106
Muu põhjus**	46	46	46	30	19

* ei ole arvatud kokku hulka ** Muu põhjus - kriminaalmenetluses osalemine ja välisleping

Allikas: Politsei- ja Piirivalveamet

Student migration

To obtain an Estonian visa or residence permit for studying, a person must be admitted to an Estonian vocational or higher education institution or another study programme, meet all the related academic and language requirements, and be able to pay for the studies if there is a tuition fee. Universities have to constantly monitor that students participate in their studies and prevent students from misusing their residence permits. On the other hand, the Estonian regulation on student migration is also relatively liberal – several countries have restrictions on, for example, how many hours a week a student can work, but there are no such restrictions in Estonia – the only condition is that working must not interfere with studies. For example, if a foreign student falls behind in his/her studies and no longer meets the requirements for full-time study, his/her residence permit may be revoked.

According to research, in 2020, about half of all international students had a job. At the same time, as many as [84%](#) of students in Estonian-language curricula were employed.

The primary residence permit expires. What happens to the alien?

As in other EU countries, a person can stay in Estonia with his/her primary residence permit for as long as there is a basis for his/her stay (for example, the person still works at the place where he/she came to work or is matriculated as a student in the same curriculum) or until five years have passed. During this time, a large number of all those arriving in Estonia will find new challenges in another country. However, those who want to stay in Estonia more permanently and have already mastered Estonian at the intermediate level (B1) can also apply for a long-term residence permit and stay in Estonia even permanently. If a person does not yet speak Estonian to this extent, the residence permit can be extended for a limited period, although even then, for example, migrant workers are required to have at least A2 proficiency in Estonian.

However, if a person has lived in Estonia for eight years (at least five of them continually in Estonia), speaks Estonian at a B1 level, and has a permanent legal income, he/she also has the opportunity to apply for Estonian citizenship.

Thus, Estonia's current migration regulation seeks to partially cover the present labour needs: to pick this year's strawberries, to complete unfinished buildings, to find the additional workforce that is currently lacking. And other measures will pave the way for long-term hopes for the future: for Estonia to be a land of smart and competitive jobs and attractive to global talent. Will it really happen? We shall see. As has already been said in the chapter on migration policy, it is quite difficult to get people to follow instructions to the letter. Although migration policy determines who can come here, under what conditions and for how long, then who stays here also depends on other policies, the private sector and society at large.

Discussion points

- See also **Chapter 4 "Migration Policy: Why and How Do Countries Regulate Migration?"** and discuss which migration regulation would be most beneficial for Estonia in your opinion? Is it reasonable for Estonia to abandon the immigration quota and, for example, switch to only labour market control or a points system? Or is the quota system still worth maintaining, and perhaps should even be developed somehow?
- How do you assess the impact of the Soviet era on Estonian migration policy? How different do you think Estonia's current migration policy would have been if it had not been for the Soviet occupation and the development of Estonia's migration policy had been more in line with Western countries?

Further reading

For the current exact list of exceptions to the immigration quota, see §115 of the Aliens Act <https://www.riigiteataja.ee/akt/110072020073?leiaKehtiv>

You can find all the rules for granting citizenship by naturalisation in the second chapter of the Citizenship Act: <https://www.riigiteataja.ee/akt/103122020004?leiaKehtiv>

History of Estonian immigration: <https://www.err.ee/1608114112/jaak-valge-ja-andres-aule-sisser-anne-eestisse-eriti-eestlastele-moeldes>

You can follow the updates on migration regulation, for example, via the EMN Estonia's annual reports: <https://www.emn.ee/publications-catalog/aastaruanded/>

You can get acquainted with up-to-date migration statistics, for example, through EMN Estonia's statistical reports: <https://www.emn.ee/publications-catalog/statistikavaljaanded/>



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6. ILLEGAL MIGRATION

Mari-Liis Jakobson

This chapter interprets the causes of illegal migration and the measures and ways to stop or prevent it.

People have been moving around the world for millennia, but the phenomenon known as illegal migration has only emerged recently, more specifically over the last hundred years. This is primarily due to the desire of countries to control their borders and those who live in their territory. Based on this, legal migration channels have been planned, and anything outside of the specified framework is referred to as *illegal*.

It can be said that illegal migration occurs where state laws and migration laws conflict. In situations where people migrate differently than countries would like. In situations where the pull and push factors of migration are stronger than the fear of violating the law (we talked about what pulls and pushes migrants in **Chapter 3, "Why Do People Migrate?"**).

Can a migrant be illegal?

Often, there is a fine line between legal and illegal migration – for example, a person who enters a country illegally but declares "Asylum" when meeting with a border guard may remain in the country on a legal basis during the asylum procedure. International law stipulates that a person fleeing persecution must be assisted even if he or she has arrived through illegal channels. Due to the vague boundary of legality, it is also thought that we could use the term *irregular immigrant* instead of *illegal immigrant* because a person can never be illegal; only their actions can violate the law (i.e., it is quite correct to talk about illegal migration).

Who are these irregular migrants? Usually, the concept of illegal immigration is associated with the image of people crossing the border in the wrong place – crossing the Mediterranean in an inflatable boat, climbing over a border fence or swimming across the river under cover of darkness. We saw such dramatic pictures in the summers of 2015 and 2021, for example. Yet, for the most part, such sights are still quite rare, especially when we compare the number of illegal border crossings with the number of legal border crossings. Similarly, the difference is quite big when comparing the number of illegal border crossings with the total number of irregular migrants: for example, in 2019, according to Frontex, 402,913 people stayed in the European Union without a legal basis, but only 141,846 illegal border crossers were caught during the same year.

Channels of illegal migration

Illegal migration often takes place with the help of smugglers or even traffickers. A smuggler is someone who helps a migrant reach the desired destination country illegally or by misusing the channels of legal migration. Smugglers organise illegal border crossings (for example, crossing the border hidden in a truck), produce and broker forged passports, and issue tourist invitations to peo-

ple who don't come to solely view the sights but plan to remain in the country illegally. Smuggling networks are often quite large, involve numerous people who play different roles and extend beyond national borders. In most cases, these networks operate for monetary gain – they earn significant sums for their services, which greatly surpass the amount needed to operate legally.

In the case of human trafficking, the level of exploitation in the relationship between the smuggler and migrant is much more profound. While smugglers are usually only interested in delivering a person across the border and collecting a fee, human trafficking means that a person who reaches the destination country continues to be exploited – for example, he/she is forced to work illegally in the prostitution business, sweatshops, etc. to cover alleged smuggling costs. Also, victims of human trafficking have not always voluntary migrants, but instead have been abducted or taken to a specific destination country against their will.

However, the victims of human trafficking and those smuggled in are also, in fact, a small minority. Most often, an irregular migrant is a person who has entered the country completely legally but has remained in place when the grounds for their legal migration have ceased. For example, a person has arrived in the country with a work residence permit, which expires after a certain period, and for one reason or another, is not issued with a new one (for example, the state's labour migration policy changes or the person does not apply for the permit). And when the expiration date comes, his/her stay in the country is illegal. A good example comes from the [United States of America](#), where until the 1960s the so-called Bracero programme had fairly flexible labour migration rules, and many Mexicans went to US farms on a seasonal basis to earn extra money. Similar to how many Estonians are currently working in construction in Finland – a few months in Finland, then back to Estonia to their families. At one point, however, the Bracero programme was terminated and it was no longer possible to enter the United States so easily. But people were already used to working on the other side of the border, families were happy with the higher standard of living, and farms were still in need of helping hands. And so it happened that many remained in the United States to work without a valid residence permit, and over time they became "illegals" who could no longer apply for US citizenship, or renew their Mexican documents without breaking the law. Nor could they see family members without crossing the border illegally.

Measures against illegal migration

What would help against illegal migration? Countries have developed a wide range of measures to both prevent illegal migration as well as address those already in the country without a legal basis. In order to prevent illegal migration, it is possible to step up controls, inform potential irregular migrants of the risks involved or address the root causes of illegal migration, which are often somehow linked to economic consequences. Various return schemes as well as opportunities to regularise migration have been set up to deal with irregular migrants already in the country.

More efficient border control

In order to prevent illegal border crossings, it is possible to improve controls at the external borders. Contemporary border management is increasingly using technology: thermal cameras on the land border which can detect when, for example, someone is secretly trying to cross the border at night; sensor systems on the sea border that also detect movement; and drones, which can also inform

monitoring centres over long distances when a suspicious sea or land vehicle is active in the border area. People hiding in vehicles can be detected with heart rate monitors. Document control technologies are constantly being improved and border fences are being erected here and there. All these technologies are also used to guard the European Union's external borders.

By the way, in order to prevent situations like the 2015 refugee crisis, the EU Border Guard Agency has set up a standing corps and a list of reserve officials, who can be sent to crisis areas. Also, there are joint missions in areas where there is more illegal migration. The only problem with these measures is that professional smugglers are keeping track of developments – if border guards enhance control in one section, smugglers will use slightly different migration routes; as counterfeit ID detection technologies improve, villains will also find ways to improve counterfeits. It is therefore not possible to build a fully fortress-like Europe.

A border fence is no miracle cure either. For example, in 2012, a border fence was erected on the land border between Turkey and Greece, where there were many illegal entry attempts. After that, the activity in this section almost ceased, but in subsequent months traffic on the maritime migration route increased.

Return

Control can also be strengthened within the country, which makes it possible to deal with the largest group, i.e., those who are in the country without a legal basis. When a state discovers that someone is staying in the country illegally, they are usually ordered to leave and are given a deadline to leave independently. However, not everyone wants to or even can do so, for example, if they do not have valid travel documents or money to buy plane tickets. To this end, countries have set up return programmes. This means that the state arranges the repatriation of the person: arranges the flight, communicates, if necessary, with the country of the person's nationality so that necessary travel documents can be arranged etc.

The return can be a forced return, where the person is escorted back to his/her homeland under police/border guard and medical supervision, or it can be voluntary, where the person leaves by himself/herself, or at least cooperates with the officials. To motivate the latter, the IOM has developed a [voluntary return programme](#) that seeks to address the root causes of migration, which are often of an economic nature. Such programmes provide returnees with training, for example, to enable them to take up a new job or start a business in their home country, or they are offered microcredit to support starting a business. Of course, such schemes have also been criticised, as they can encourage abuses of the system – people might travel to the country to be deported and gain economic benefits. (That said, [studies](#) analysing the migration decisions of migrants arriving through irregular channels suggest that, in general, the awareness of such migrants regarding the migration policies of destination countries is almost non-existent. Thus, it is rather a theoretical possibility that an irregular migration route will be undertaken solely for the purpose of return support.) On the other hand, it is questionable how voluntary such a return is if the only alternative for a person is the fear of forced return.

In general, however, the number of participants in return support programmes is rather modest. For example, at least seven out of ten migrants return from Estonia voluntarily, two are forcibly deported and only one uses return support. In 2017–2019, 3,011 persons had returned to their country of origin after having received an official return decision from Estonia; this is almost equal to the total number of people who had received a return decision. 75% of them returned voluntarily, 16% by force and less

than 9% used return support. However, this is rather exceptional in the European context. (The return statistics of both Estonia and other EU countries can be found [here](#).)

However, the biggest problem with returns is that the countries of origin of irregular migrants are reluctant to take them back and refuse or impede cooperation with the deporting country. Why? Above all, because the economies of many countries depend on financial remittances from migrants, regardless of whether they are abroad legally or illegally. The countries of origin also feel that Europeans' fear of migration gives them a certain position of power. What are you prepared to give in return for us accepting our citizens? Development support, visa facilitation, anything else? And so, return processes can sometimes take even years.

Nevertheless, detecting illegal residents is not always easy. It is quite simple for a person to disappear from the radar, and it is not uncommon for a person who has received an order to leave from one EU country to flee to another Member State to avoid its enforcement. In order to detect such cases – but also, for example, to detect expired visas or residence permits – a multi-layered network of databases is being developed in the EU, which should help Member States exchange information more easily.

Regularisation of migration

Of course, in addition to enhancing control, there is another solution: tackling the root causes of illegal migration. Until 2017, many EU countries were concerned about forged documents or Ukrainians violating border rules. These problems disappeared in 2018, when Ukrainian citizens were granted the right to enter the EU without a visa. At the same time, for example, illegal migration from African countries has increased since 2010, which can be partly explained by the fact that countries have gradually reduced the means of legal migration to people from those countries. And if it's not possible to enter the destination country legally, people will choose less safe migration routes and also engage the services of smugglers.

For example, simplifying labour migration rules can provide an alternative to illegal migration, which aims to reach higher-wage countries and improve one's quality of life. Several countries are also implementing resettlement programmes to receive people who are entitled to asylum from refugee camps abroad. It should also reduce the motivation of refugees fleeing conflict or persecution to make a dangerous and illegal trip to a country where they could apply for asylum.

Expanding the possibilities for legal migration allows for better control over the activities of immigrants – for example, to ensure that they are law-abiding and pay taxes. The existence of legal channels also reduces the likelihood that they will end up in organised crime networks, fund smuggling networks or become victims of human trafficking, and let's face it, their subsequent detention and forced deportation will not be cheap.

Of course, it is a justified question as to whether the state's relaxed migration control would add other concerns associated with excessive immigration – labour market dysfunction, congestion of social services and the challenges of integration. And it is certainly worth remembering that many irregular migrants don't have much knowledge of legal migration channels, which means that regularising migration is not necessarily a magic wand.

Development cooperation to prevent illegal migration

Therefore, the prevention of economic migration has instead become a popular measure. Namely, many countries, as well as the EU, cooperate extensively with the countries of emigration, but also with the countries of transit where smugglers operate. How did the number of illegal border crossers arriving in Italy fall sharply in 2018? The Libyan border guard began to monitor the dinghies leaving from Libyan ports much more efficiently. But cooperation with Niger, an important transit channel where some desert tribes make a living by helping refugees from sub-Saharan Africa to cross the desert and reach the Mediterranean coast, has certainly had a significant impact.

Development cooperation programmes help train and equip border guards, but there are also programmes that support economic development, which should prevent the need to embark on a risky migration journey. For example, various development cooperation programmes seek to improve local infrastructure and support sustainable entrepreneurship.

It is true that these development programmes have also been criticised a great deal because although there is a fundamental willingness to negotiate migration cooperation, countries' views on migration are simply so different that no common agreement can be reached. From the point of view of developing countries, the opportunity to seek happiness abroad and send remittances back home seems simply much more profitable than investing in local roads and some new factories, especially as the wages in the factories are likely paid by local standards, and opening new factories does nothing to solve the population growth challenges either. And as stated in the migration process chapter "**Why Do People Migrate?**", improved living conditions may instead boost migration.

It is also not always easy to organise effective development cooperation. It is difficult to ensure that aid really reaches those in need and fulfils its purpose. Development cooperation programmes can fail because of inappropriate planning – not taking account of the local context – and the risk of corruption. For example, the support funds might end up in the pockets of some local leaders.

Information campaigns

Information campaigns have also gained popularity. These are videos where people who were trapped by traffickers or failed on their migratory journey share their experiences in order to break the myth of the sweet life that is thought to lie ahead at the end of the journey. Often, those who have already arrived abroad don't want to break this myth, and even tell enviable stories about their in fact highly modest life. Destination countries are now trying to break this information stream and, for example, are targeting their advertising clips on YouTube to the same target groups to which human traffickers are trying to sell these dreams. The information campaign is certainly not a magic weapon for eliminating illegal migration, but it does have a clear impact. For example, the IOM pilot project [Migrants as Messengers](#) in Senegal pointed out that the campaign significantly raised the awareness of potential migrants about the risks of using irregular migration channels and reduced their motivation to embark on a migratory journey.

All in all, there is no miracle cure to completely close all illegal migration channels nor a magic trick to eliminate those who are in the country without a legal basis. However, effective border control and international cooperation, informing migrants and providing alternatives can significantly reduce illegal migration.

Discussion points

- How does a person become an irregular migrant (e.g., as a result of an expired residence permit, illegal border crossing, human trafficking)? Imagine and describe the journey of three different people: who are they, why did they move, why have they become irregular migrants?
- What methods (or sets of methods) do you think should be used to prevent illegal migration? Put together your favourite combination of border management and migration prevention methods.

Further reading

On the website of the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) you will find both [an interactive map](#) of illegal border crossings as well as [up-to-date reports](#) on illegal migration and border patrol in general.

Eurostat compiles statistics on illegal residents, expulsion decisions and returns: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/database>

Statistics on human trafficking can be found here: <https://www.ctdatacollaborative.org/>

Website of the Voluntary Assisted Return and Reintegration programme from Estonia: <http://varre.directmedia.ee/>



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7. REFUGEES AND ASYLUM

Mari-Liis Jakobson

In this chapter, you will learn who is a refugee, how international asylum policy has evolved, why countries accept refugees at all and what are the bottlenecks in the asylum system today.

Refugees in history

The concept of asylum is very old and dates back to antiquity. Initially, it marked temples as holy places where one could find refuge from the injustice or cruelty of the secular world. However, it had little to do with international migration.

The concept of refugees was first used in the [17th century](#) when France forced the local Huguenots to exile. The Huguenots were a Protestant sect in an otherwise Catholic country. During the fierce religious wars of the 16th century, they were perceived in France as treacherous and dangerous people who had three choices: to convert, flee the country or die. The Huguenots mostly fled to their fellow believers — mostly to the Protestant Netherlands and England, where they were initially received out of compassion, but later with obvious gratitude: the Huguenots were mostly urban craftsmen whose strict and hard-working attitude made them very appreciative members of society.

There have been many other groups throughout history that have had to flee persecution. However, refugees and asylum policies have mostly become relevant in the 20th century, as countries began to control their borders much more vigorously than before. The intensity of conflicts has also increased over the last century.

Development of international asylum policy

International refugee policy was born out of societal transformations during and after the First World War. The necessity of such a policy became evident with the Armenian genocide, from which some [800,000 people fled abroad](#). The October Revolution of 1917 forced about [a million](#) people to flee Russia. The post-war peace agreements drew the line between Greece and Turkey, and left about [1.6 million](#) Greeks and Turks on the wrong side of the border and without their citizenship.

Thus, in 1921, the newly formed League of Nations established the first commission to deal with refugee issues; it was led by former polar researcher Fridtjof Nansen. As the vast majority of refugees did not have a valid document with which they could legally enter a safe country, the commission's first major task was to develop an internationally recognised travel document, which became known as [the Nansen passport](#). A total of about 450,000 Nansen passports were issued and these allowed refugees to travel to their relatives or find work in a safe country.

At the same time, Nansen passports were only a temporary solution, and the attempt to create a general convention on the status and rights of refugees with a lasting effect and widespread recognition failed in the interwar period. This did not happen until 1967. The Second World War displaced

more than [40 million](#) refugees across Europe. Some of them later returned to their homeland, but others – such as Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians whose country of nationality was occupied by the Soviet Union – initially stayed in refugee camps until several Western countries such as the United States, Canada, Australia and the United Kingdom accepted them. [In 1950](#), the UN Refugee Agency was established, and a year later the [Geneva Refugee Convention](#) was adopted, defining who qualifies as a refugee and what their rights are. At the same time, the Convention applied only to European refugees, and therefore the number of acceding countries remained modest. In 1967, the Additional Protocol to the Geneva Convention was ratified, applying the term and rights of refugees to all refugees. By the end of 2020, [147 countries had joined it](#).

Why do countries protect refugees?

Why is there a need for internationally recognised asylum rules at all? First, of course, these help to enforce human rights: freedom of expression, religion and conscience, as well as the right to human dignity. Second, agreeing on common rules should also help to dispel the risks of conflict, where, for example, the heavy burden of dealing with refugees is left to a few neighbouring countries.

At the same time, the refugee issue has always had an important foreign policy dimension, and asylum has not always been granted solely based on real protection needs; it is also dependent on a country's foreign policy objectives. For example, during the peak of the Cold War in the 1980s, when the whole world was divided between the spheres of influence of the United States and the Soviet Union, the United States protected [Nicaraguan](#) refugees fleeing the crimes of the left-wing Sandinista regime. However, those who fled El Salvador, Honduras or Guatemala for similar reasons were not accepted because the local right-wing governments were US allies.

Often, economic motives also carry weight in the admission decision. Australia and Canada, for example, resettled refugees very kindly when the countries were relatively sparsely populated and experienced labour shortages. Canada, by the way, is still doing this.

Who is a refugee?

But let's return to the Geneva Convention for a moment: who is a refugee anyway? Actually, a displaced person who is forced to leave their home for some reason doesn't necessarily officially qualify as a refugee. [According to the Geneva Convention](#), a refugee is a person who has a valid fear of persecution on the grounds of race, religion, nationality, being a member of a social group or due to political opinion and who is outside his/her country of nationality and cannot or does not dare to return. Thus, refugees include, for example, dissidents, religious or ethnic groups that are persecuted in their home country, or other minorities, such as sexual minorities in countries where homosexuality is criminalised, officials who have cooperated with a previous regime or military personnel.

The Geneva Convention presupposes that when a state grants someone refugee status it also ensures certain fundamental rights, such as identification documents and the right to a fair trial, as well as the right to work and study and, when necessary, ensures basic upkeep. The Convention also prohibits sending the refugee back to the country of origin if he/she may still be persecuted

there (also known as the non-refoulement principle). However, refugee status is not eternal and can be revoked if the original threat ceases or the person becomes a permanent resident through other means or acquires the citizenship of the host country.

Refugee Convention and current challenges

At the same time, a debate has begun that questions whether the Convention is still in line with contemporary realities. According to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, in 2020 there were a total of about [80 million](#) people in the world who had been forced to leave their homes due to conflict, violence, human rights abuse or natural disasters. However, only one in four had refugee status. Who are the rest and why haven't they been protected? 45 million, or more than half of them, have fled within their country, so other countries cannot give them asylum, even if they are prepared to do so. International humanitarian aid also reaches them with difficulty. The number of international refugees who do not qualify for official refugee status has also increased significantly in recent decades. They are not fleeing because of state persecution, but rather because of failed states: due to civil wars or humanitarian disasters caused by, for example, natural disasters, economic crises or rampant crime. For example, more than five million people had fled Venezuela by 2020, mainly due to the failure of economic policies, but the vast majority will not be able to obtain refugee status because suffering from government decisions is not the same as political persecution. Also, people displaced by war do not usually receive refugee status, but rather subsidiary protection status, which will be discussed later.

Refugees often also get trapped in migration, i.e., they have been forced to leave their homeland and find temporary shelter, for example, in a refugee camp whose residents are barred from integrating into the society and labour market of the destination country; and they cannot relocate to a safe country or return home because they do not have the necessary documents. For example, there are still almost [5 million](#) Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and the Gaza Strip who (or whose fathers, grandfathers or great-grandfathers) fled the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in 1948. One third of them still live in refugee camps set up in 1950. It is not possible for those born in the camp to acquire the citizenship of the host country or to enter the labour market there, as refugees are prohibited from working in many countries that have not joined the Convention. In 2020, there were almost 16 million people in the world were caught up by protracted crises and remain in long-term forced displacement.

Therefore, many forced migrants today face a false dilemma: to stay in a refugee camp and face the risk of themselves and their children being disregarded; to travel illegally to big cities to find work and livelihood, but to remain undocumented, which will endanger their livelihood in the long run; or take a long and dangerous journey to a safe country in the hope of getting protection. By the way, this last option is chosen by a rather small minority: in 2020, as many as [86%](#) of all refugees remained in developing countries.

But what could be the alternative? One option is to prevent crises that cause an influx of refugees. International security measures, such as the deployment of peacekeepers, as well as humanitarian aid to minimise the impact of crises, and developmental cooperation policies aimed at preventing longer-term crises have been applied to achieve this.

But what to do if the crisis has already broken out? As we know, the neighbouring countries where most refugees remained encamped may not have acceded to the Refugee Convention, which means that refugees will not be granted official refugee status, which would allow them to continue living more or less normally. Also, refugee camps set up in these countries cannot usually function without international humanitarian aid and support; therefore, refugees from these camps might still move on to seek asylum elsewhere.

A possible solution could lie in resettlement programmes, in which third countries receive a certain number of refugees who are entitled to international protection. In the same way, many people who fled their homeland during the Second World War and were trapped in refugee camps in Germany – among them Estonians who had fled the Soviet occupation – ended up in countries such as Canada, the US and Australia. Today similar programmes are being implemented by many countries, including many EU Member States.

But the question remains: what will become of the refugees in a situation where it is not possible to resettle everyone in safe countries? Migration researchers [Alexander Betts and Paul Collier](#) have proposed the creation of so-called special economic zones instead of refugee camps as one possibility. Instead of forcing people into the camp's poverty and unemployment, they are proposing to create special areas for refugees that can autonomously conclude trade agreements and cooperation projects with developed countries, and therefore function in a meaningful and self-sufficient way. An important role model is [Uganda](#), which, instead of sending refugees to camps and providing subsistence benefits, allocates a small plot of land to refugees who arrive there or creates other pre-conditions (allows employment) for them to support themselves. It supports refugees' independent subsistence and reduces their dependence on additional aid.

Of course, this solution also has its question marks – for example, what would prevent everyone in developing countries from becoming refugees and moving to this little oasis? Or why should sovereign states agree to cede their territory for this purpose? The system has faced similar problems in Uganda: somehow the space for refugees must be distributed in a way that others do not feel deprived. But the problem is real: every two seconds, at least one person in the world becomes a homeless refugee.

Organisation of asylum policy in the European Union and Estonia

Ultimately, it is necessary to clarify the asylum system of Estonia and the EU. All EU countries have acceded to the Geneva Refugee Conventions, and thus all beneficiaries of protection receive the same rights. For example, Estonia joined the Geneva Convention in 1997. As the EU external borders are common, Member States have also considered it appropriate to have a common asylum policy in the way applications are processed. After all, even the most immigration-friendly countries are not interested in asylum seekers moving around rather uncontrollably or, for example, seeking protection from different Member States at the same time.

Therefore, the EU has adopted the [Dublin Regulation](#), which stipulates that an asylum application must be processed by the country through which the refugee entered the European Union and, if necessary, the refugee will be sent from another Member State to the country of initial entry. There is also the [EURODAC](#) database, where all Member States register asylum seekers and can cross-check whether a person with the same name, face or fingerprints has already applied for protection elsewhere.

It is true, for example, that the 2015 refugee crisis severely tested the border countries, with almost a million asylum seekers arriving in the EU, mainly through Italy and Greece. That is when discussions began on whether it is possible to create a new system based on solidarity. The European Migration Plan for 2017–2020 introduced one-off refugee quotas for countries, but the programme did not unfold exactly as planned: for example, only a third of the planned amount of refugees was relocated from Greece and Italy. This was partly due to opposition from some countries but was even more affected by the fact that there were significantly fewer refugees eligible for protection than initially thought. However, the search for a more solidarity-based relocation system approved by the Member States is continuing.

Additionally, EU countries have also agreed on common principles for processing asylum applications and a minimum package of rights for applicants and beneficiaries of protection. For example, the directives mandate how the reception and processing of applications should be and what migrants' rights are. But the Member States still have quite a lot to decide. For example, [the Reception Conditions Directive](#) specifies that the state is obliged to provide shelter to the asylum seeker. It is up to the countries to decide whether it is a bed in a dormitory or a three-room apartment.

The European Union has also jointly agreed on two basic protection statuses for refugees. The first is refugee status, which is granted to people whose status is as described in the UN Refugee Convention. A person who has been granted refugee status can initially remain in the destination country for at least three years, after which his/her status will be reassessed. Maybe the need for protection has changed because the situation in the country of origin has improved. On the other hand, perhaps there is no hope of improvement, and a well-integrated refugee can already apply for permanent residency.

At the same time, the EU also protects those who are simply fleeing conflict, in a process that is called subsidiary protection status. In the middle of the last decade, for example, several Ukrainians received subsidiary protection due to war activities in their home region. Subsidiary protection status is granted for a year or two, after which the situation is reassessed.

Of course, countries are also allowed to provide protection on other grounds, including providing humanitarian protection to people fleeing climate change, extreme poverty or famine. Estonia does not offer such protection, but some other Member States do.

Discussion points

- Why do countries protect refugees? What noble and more self-interested arguments do you remember from this chapter?
- How realistic is it that seven million refugees will arrive in Estonia? Where should these people come from so that they can reach Estonia under the conditions of the Dublin system? Given how refugees move during a crisis, in what crisis would that be a real threat?

Further reading

Overview of the Common European Asylum System in Estonian: https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/default/files/e-library/docs/ceas-fact-sheets/ceas_factsheet_et.pdf

A more comprehensive (and regularly updated) overview of the Common European Asylum System in English: https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/asylum_en

UN Fact Sheet: https://www.unhcr.org/cy/wp-content/uploads/sites/41/2021/01/10-facts-about-refugees-1-Aug-2020_ENG.pdf

Overview: Who are the refugees trapped in migration? <https://www.unrefugees.org/news/protracted-refugee-situations-explained/>



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8. EMIGRATION AND FOREIGN COMMUNITIES

Mari-Liis Jakobson

So far, we have talked more about migration from the perspective of the destination country or the migrant. However, migration is also very relevant for many countries of origin. In this chapter, you will find out what problems, as well as opportunities, come with emigration and how countries try to make emigration work in their favour.

The migration history of countries can be very different. As you know from **Chapter 3, "Why Do People Migrate?"**, migration occurs when the population in a country of origin grows rapidly, when some push factors force people to move or simply pull factors overcome the inconveniences of migration. In the following, we will look at four types of communities abroad, the impact of emigration on countries of origin and what policies countries apply to them.

Countries not interested in emigration

In some cases, emigration is relatively small or imperceptible due to compensatory immigration. Usually, the state doesn't have many other policies for communities abroad other than providing consular services to its citizens living abroad: for example, the opportunity to renew their documents while abroad, to participate in voting, or to receive counselling or assistance in case of distress abroad.

Of course, this does not mean that emigrant communities could not become an important issue at some point. For example, until recently, the UK had no problems regarding how many Britons lived abroad and where they lived. There were even fewer concerns as to whether they would return. But then preparations began to leave the EU, and suddenly there was the question of nearly one million Britons who live in Spain for at least part of the year, and what rights apply to them after Brexit. In total, there were around [1.2 million](#) Britons in the EU at that moment, most of them pensioners. At the same time, 3.3 million EU citizens had moved to the UK from the EU Member States alone, and 2.1 million of them were active in the British labour market. It is no wonder, then, that the issue of emigration did not stand out. In reality, however, emigration does have an impact on the British economy. For example, it has been calculated that as much as £1.4 billion exited the country in the form of pensions each year to pensioners who spend this amount abroad.

Emigration countries with declining populations

At the same time, for example, in many Central and Eastern European countries, emigration is a very important issue, usually in those countries where population development has reached a stage where the birth rate has already fallen. And when the last larger age cohorts suddenly had the opportunity to move freely in the European Union, the population shrank at a dizzying pace at times.

In Lithuania, for example, the population fell by as much as a quarter between 1990 and 2020: from 3.7 million to 2.8 million. The negative birth rate (–189,000 people) also plays a role in this, i.e., there are fewer births than deaths. But migration exceeds this several times (–710,000), and undoubtedly migration also affects birth rates as people leave Lithuania at an age where one typically starts a family. Emigration is also on a comparable scale in, for example, [Romania, Croatia and Latvia](#).

In recent decades, many people have also left Estonia, and similarly to other Eastern European countries, our birth rate has decreased (in 2020, an average of [1.58 children](#) per woman were born in Estonia, but to maintain a stable population, the birth rate has to be at least 2.1 per woman). Compared to 1991, when Estonia regained its independence, the population of Estonia had decreased by about [16%](#) by 2015. Yet, unlike many other Central and Eastern European countries, there are many circular migrants among Estonians. In other words, people go abroad for a few years but later return. Immigration has also helped to gradually turn the Estonian population back into growth.

Emigration countries with declining populations have begun inventing ways to deal with emigration. Experience in many countries has shown that return campaigns don't work: for a person to want to migrate, the pull and push factors are much more important than policies, i.e., how the economy is doing in both countries and what quality of life is affordable in both countries.

Therefore, these countries are developing strategies to adapt to emigration: it is important to reconnect with those who have already left and to inform them that their homeland has not forgotten them, and if they want to return, the doors are open. Many countries, including Estonia, have also developed support [measures](#) to help migrants return. For example, there are guidance materials on where and how to find a suitable job. It is quite difficult for a person who has worked in a large metropolis to integrate into a much less specialised and often quite networked labour market in a smaller home country, where everyone knows everyone, but yet he/she is a stranger. Finding a school and initial support for children is a separate challenge. Often, school-age children followed a completely different school programme in a different language in the previous host country. For example, in the eighth grade, it is quite hard to suddenly switch from Finnish biological terms to Estonian ones. And what about foreign language learning, for example? What if the rest of the classmates have already learned Russian since the fourth grade, but this was not taught in the British school curriculum?

Finding a family doctor and handling the bureaucracy with government authorities and local government can also be a headache because, like immigrants, returnees face many bureaucratic obstacles. The challenges regarding societal attitudes shouldn't also be underestimated. While there has been a lot of talk about anti-immigration attitudes, returned compatriots also often feel a certain alienation or at least lack of comprehension by the host society. Therefore, some transnational/diaspora policy measures focus on the society of the home country: for example, support is given to media programmes that help the society of the country of origin better understand the lives and challenges of returnees, but also to demonstrate the value of their knowledge and experiences.

Attempts are also made to connect those who remain abroad with the culture and economy of their homeland: to involve them as contributors to the country's development, as promoters of export or simply as practitioners of national culture abroad. For example, many countries including Estonia encourage people living abroad to contribute to civic as well as economic diplomacy. The role of the state in this instance could be to bring together a company that wants to expand into new markets and a compatriot who knows both the legal environment and business practices of the destination country.

Countries that favour emigration

However, some countries in the world have a completely different demographic situation. For example, the Philippines: an archipelagic island country in Southeast Asia with a population of over 100 million that still in the early 1990s had an average birth rate of [four children per woman](#). The Philippines is one of the countries that indeed encourages its citizens to go abroad. The Philippines even has a separate entity, which seeks to ensure that emigration is organised effectively and is safe — e.g., so that migrants do not fall victim to human trafficking. This body is also committed to ensuring that overseas communities do not lose touch with their homeland. Even the education system in the Philippines takes into account the possibilities of emigration.

For countries such as the Philippines, emigration is important for at least two reasons: first, emigration helps keep the population more stable, and second, remittances make a very important contribution to the country's gross domestic product. In most cases, these are completely ordinary money transfers, where those who have gone abroad support close relatives, for example. In order to improve their living standards, the relatives are channelling money into the wider domestic economy, from which others are already benefiting. Remittances account for about [10%](#) of the GDP of the Philippines. Financial remittances are also discussed in more detail in **Chapter 9, "The Economic Impact of Migration"**.

However, some countries have gone a step further in maximising the contribution of their communities abroad. At the turn of the century, for example, Mexico launched the so-called 3+1 programme to motivate compatriots abroad who wanted to contribute to the well-being of their home village: for each peso sent by an emigrant, the local government, state government and federal government added another peso. Under this programme, a good number of Mexican municipalities developed, for example, proper sewerage, water infrastructure, power infrastructure or roads.

Countries with diasporas

However, there is a fourth type of state that doesn't experience much emigration now but has had in the past. These are countries that have developed a diaspora. The term diaspora comes from ancient Greek and means scattered. The diaspora is a historical national community whose ancestors have left their homeland, but have managed to maintain their community and common identity abroad. One of the best-known diasporas is probably the Jews. For a long time, they were a nation without a state, but they were still united by their religion, culture and languages. They were also a community which so many countries inadvertently helped to preserve through policies of persecution and ghettoisation. However, there are also overseas communities that are much more diffuse, such as the Irish. There are an estimated [100 million](#) people with Irish roots in the world, but only around 5 million live in Ireland. Such a large community developed through the 19th and 20th centuries, largely from the descendants of the Irish who went abroad in search of a better life.

Estonia also has quite a large diaspora. It is estimated that there are a total of [150,000 to 250,000 Estonians](#) living outside of Estonia – this is almost one in five Estonians. Of course, this is a fairly diverse group. People have travelled at different times and in different directions. In the 19th century, Estonians mostly migrated to the Russian Empire – for example, when Estonia declared independence in 1918 there were [50,000 Estonians](#) living in St. Petersburg. However, in the middle of the 20th

century, the Second World War and the subsequent occupation forced tens of thousands of Estonians into exile in the West. Of course, diaspora is a somewhat strange term for the third wave of migration or for those who have left Estonia after the country regained its independence, but these people form an important part of a wider transnational Estonian community – a nation that maintains ties and common identity regardless of borders.

The diaspora in itself is a very exciting cultural phenomenon: it not only preserves the language and culture of the homeland but it also creates a kind of subculture of the diaspora, which over time begins to significantly differ from the language and culture of the homeland. For example, various [expatriate Estonian languages](#) have been studied, which indicate that over time, loanwords from the language of the host country will start to appear in the language, while archaic things that have already disappeared from the language of homeland Estonia might still be preserved. For example, in the American Estonian language, there are inflections that are no longer commonly used here. For example, they say, "Lapsed saivad kommi." But what we call "arvuti" is more often referred to as "kompuuter" in the diaspora.

The aim of diaspora policy is, above all, to use one's foreign communities as a kind of bridgehead: as advocates of one's country, language and culture abroad, which helps promote diplomatic relations between different countries, for example. Perhaps the best-known diaspora lobby organisation in the world is the American-Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), which has repeatedly prevented decisions in the United States that could be detrimental to Israel. Similarly, others also try to influence politics. For example, [JBANC](#), a lobby organisation representing the Baltic communities in the United States along with other representatives of the Baltic diasporas were largely responsible for Canada and the United States imposing sanctions on the so-called Magnitsky list of select Russian oligarchs.

Typically, the goals of diaspora policy are of course milder: for example, to support cultural exports or economic relations. An interesting example again relates to these 100 million Irish. In 2012, for example, Ireland launched a spectacular tourism project, [The Gathering](#), which invited all people with Irish roots to spend their holidays in Ireland. 100 million is a huge market!

However, for the identity of diasporas to be preserved and the connection with the homeland to be maintained, it is undoubtedly important to keep in touch with their communities abroad: to recognise diasporas, to preserve their culture and to provide language learning opportunities. For example, Estonia has a language camps project that enables Estonian children living abroad to come to Estonia in the summer, where they practice Estonian, discover the country and make Estonian friends, among other activities.

Of course, the diasporas have changed significantly in recent decades. While in the past the diaspora was still a community cut off from its homeland to some extent, today one can ask how cut off from the homeland can one be? In the Information Age, the press, culture and friends from the homeland are only a mouse click away, and international travel is also easier. Thus, the question is less about the policies that promote or maintain diasporas, but rather about policies that engage with transnational communities.

All in all, communities abroad are an important instrument of soft power. Of course, you may ask whether it is still right to keep in touch with one's compatriots, who, from the point of view of the destination country, should perhaps integrate locally? In Estonia we are proud of being a small, but still global nation and we are happy that it is easier for Estonian companies to reach new international markets or that Estonian children living abroad can also learn Estonian there or come to Estonia for a

language immersion camp. But when Russia pursues a compatriot policy and tries to spread its ideology among the Russians here to influence Estonian domestic policy through their foreign community, or recruit Russian-speaking youths into Artek camps, we perceive it as a security threat.

Therefore, transnationalism policy is quite a diverse phenomenon that can be developed both for the benefit of neighbourly and constructive international relations and for the integration of overseas communities, as well as for the opposite purpose. Depends on who's judging.

Discussion points

- Think of an Estonian who has lived abroad for the last few years (a friend, relative, acquaintance or even a fictional character). Who is he/she and what does he/she do? Under what conditions could he/she consider returning to Estonia? What support might he/she need? Who can offer this support? (e.g., friends and relatives, society at large, state, local government, NGOs)
- Let's suppose that this Estonian can't or doesn't want to return to Estonia. Could he/she be useful to Estonia in his/her country of residence and how? (e.g., by sending remittances, mediating one's knowledge or skills to people living in Estonia, helping export Estonian culture or supporting Estonian companies' expansion abroad, acting as a citizen diplomat)

Further reading

European immigration and emigration dynamics can be accessed at [KCMD Dynamic Data Hub](#).

Data on Estonian emigration and return migration are published by [Statistics Estonia](#).

You can read more about the policy aimed at overseas communities in Estonia and elsewhere in the chapter "Transnationalism Policies" of the *Estonian Human Development Report 2016/2017*.

An overview of the services and information offered to Estonian returnees can be found, for example, on [Eesti.ee](#).



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9. THE ECONOMIC IMPACT OF MIGRATION

Mari-Liis Jakobson

In this chapter, you will learn about the economic costs and benefits of migration for destination countries and countries of origin: how migration affects state revenues and expenditure, the labour market and other markets, and how it affects the country's wider economic prospects.

The economic impact of migration is perhaps one of the most multifaceted and misunderstood issues in the field of migration in general. At one end are optimists who expect long-term economic benefits from immigrants, both as a workforce and as taxpayers. Pessimists fear that migrants will take away jobs from the main population or live at the state's expense. So, where lies the truth?

Migration as a positive-sum or negative-sum game?

In practice, a lot depends on who is migrating, from where and for what purpose. Also, whether we analyse the economic impact of migration from the point of view of the destination country, the country of origin or the migrant. Migration can easily be a positive-sum game, where all three win: the country of origin, the destination country and the migrant. For example, if there is a big demographic explosion in the country of origin and significantly more people reach adulthood than are needed in their labour market, but there is a shortage of labour in the destination country. The winners are the country of origin, whose social welfare burden is decreasing; the migrant, whose quality of life is improving; and the destination country, which receives a few more workers and taxpayers.

At the same time, migration can quite easily become a negative-sum game, for example, when a highly educated person from a country with a declining population goes abroad for a simple job. This is a great loss for the country of origin, which has probably invested in his/her education; it does not greatly benefit the destination country, because the economic added value of an immigrant is small (although an educated person generally integrates better); and the migrant may gain a little in wages or living standards, but not in self-realisation.

Next, we take a closer look at the impact of migration on the destination country and the country of origin.

The economic impact of immigration

Immigrants as taxpayers and consumers

If we look at the impact of migration as a simple cost-benefit calculation, then for the destination country the migrant as both a taxpayer and a consumer is on the revenue side. Almost all migrants are taxpayers and consumers in some way. This is also so for a study migrant, who often pays tuition and for accommodation. In 2016, 5.1 million international students worldwide accounted for an estimated [300 billion dollars](#) in economic impact. It has also been calculated that in Estonia the daily

expenses of international students in 2019/2020 amounted to 33 million euros and in 2020, they paid an additional 10 million euros in labour taxes to the state revenue (plus another [3 million](#) euros in labour taxes from foreign graduates). In 2020, 5,520 foreign students studied in Estonia. However, the positive effects of migration can also be more indirect. For example, as consumers, migrants help to create a scale effect: the more people there are, the larger the market and the cheaper the unit price.

But the migration equation also has a cost side. In the long run, low-income simple jobs may be automated, leaving some people unemployed. A meagre salary doesn't allow one to accumulate an economic buffer, which in turn increases the state's costs in the case of unemployment or retraining. This is also reflected, for example, in unemployment statistics. In new immigration countries that have experienced an influx of foreign labour in recent years, the employment of foreigners can sometimes be even [higher](#) than that of locals, but this effect may diminish over time.

The costs also include other public services for migrants. In general, the same rule applies to migrants as to all others: families with children, the elderly and people with health problems are more costly to the state than healthy people of working age.

Yet, most who have decided to migrate are usually healthy and of the best working age. And the well-being of the family is also a very important argument in attracting those who have a strong positive economic impact. Therefore, extensive international research suggests that, on average, migrants in their countries of destination are still [net payers](#) (i.e. they pay more to the treasury in different taxes than they receive as services) rather than net receivers.

The integration of newcomers and, for example, maintaining their competitiveness will certainly require separate resources from the host country. At the same time, a timely investment into integration and retraining will help to avoid even higher costs later on.

Also, the market does not always work in favour of the consumer. In the case of limited benefits, prices rise instead. A good example is real estate. The promised land of the ICT sector in Silicon Valley, USA, is both a blessing and a curse for locals. The highly skilled immigrants are a real economic asset and, of course, they also create jobs for locals, pay taxes and enable locals to use services that would otherwise not be available so close to home. But at the same time, highly paid specialists are also raising prices in the local housing market. For those who are already property owners, it is a blessing, but for those who live in a rented space or are planning to buy a home, it is a curse.

Immigrants in the labour market

Perhaps the role of migrants in the labour market is even more important. Foreign labour can compensate for labour shortages. Sometimes migrants themselves can also be job creators or innovators. In the United States, for example, [one in five](#) entrepreneurs is a foreigner, while people of foreign origin make up about one tenth of the total population. And they also own almost half of all registered patents. In other words, in the United States, an immigrant is twice as likely to be a job creator as a local, and ten times more likely to be an inventor, which indirectly also facilitates new production.

But the issue of migration and the labour market also raises questions. Can migrants come and take away local jobs? Or maybe they're pushing the wages down? Practice, however, shows the opposite. In most cases, countries protect their labour markets, for example through labour market tests or salary requirements (discussed in more detail in **Chapter 4, "Migration Policy: Why and How Do**

Countries Regulate Migration?). The labour market test means that a person can only be hired from abroad if it's not possible to find an employee locally. Immigrants often work in jobs that locals do not want – such as so-called 3D jobs: where work is dangerous, dirty and demeaning. The situation whereby immigrants work in some sectors of the labour market and locals in others is called a segmented labour market. In other words, they are not directly competing for the same jobs. In a way, the society of the host country even benefits from this: lower wage costs for immigrants make it possible to obtain cheaper products and services.

In some places, migrants can also help to preserve local jobs. For example, in areas where production would otherwise be relocated due to labour shortages, foreign labour may help to retain jobs in the manufacturing sector, and this is also the case for various white-collar workers like production managers, HR specialists, payroll clerks and many others.

With the wage criterion, countries can set a minimum wage limit for migrants. It can also protect local wage levels to a certain extent. Larger statistical [studies](#) show that labour migration has a small negative effect on the level of wages in lower-paid jobs. At the same time, in middle- and higher-wage jobs, labour migration will increase wages further.

The economic impact of emigration

Migrants can also boost the economy of the country of origin. One of the most important economic effects of migration comes through remittances. Many migrants are abroad for a short time and, having earned some extra money there, actually invest it in their homeland economy: buying or improving real estate or buying goods. Many also send regular remittances to relatives. In 2020, foreign remittances accounted for more than a tenth of [Ukraine's](#) economy and more than a quarter in [Kyrgyzstan](#) and [Tajikistan](#).

However, migrants can also act as a bridgehead and help domestic businesses succeed in their destination country. As described in **Chapter 8, "Emigration and Foreign Communities"**, migrants can play an important role in some countries' export and foreign trade policies.

However, another burning issue for countries of origin is the brain drain: a situation whereby highly educated professionals are leaving. This has a negative impact on the economies of the countries of origin, as it also reduces local opportunities to set up added value businesses or to experiment with more innovative business models. This shifts the focus of the whole economy towards lower added value work, which also limits economic prosperity. It would be much more beneficial for the country of origin if the brain drain became a brain circulation: people with both higher and lower qualifications go abroad, encounter new ideas and experiences, and return to their home country to implement them. On the one hand, return and circular migration depend on the pull and push factors of the country of origin and the destination country (discussed in **the chapter on migration processes**): people must have a reason to return. This reason can be given by applying transnationalism policies: keeping communities abroad informed about opportunities in the homeland, supporting their return with support services and developing a more open attitude towards migrants in the domestic society.

Examples

In essence, we can carry out a cost-benefit analysis for each migrant individually or summarise the costs and benefits of all the migrants from all three perspectives. However, to better understand the impact of each factor, let's look at the next four examples to recognise the economic impact of migration.

The story of Ishani

Ishani is a programmer from Mumbai who has already received a good education in her home country; however, to make a career for herself, she first goes to the United States to obtain another master's degree. After graduating, she goes to the Silicon Valley, where she can break through the glass ceiling that haunts female programmers in Mumbai and land her dream job. In a few years, she receives the first major investment to properly launch her own start-up. She is in her prime working age, in good health and no social burden on the host country. Ishani herself feels that she has won the jackpot – she is living her American dream. But the US has won at least as much: Ishani's parents have supported the university with a hefty tuition fee. Later she became a lucrative taxpayer for the country and the state of California as well as a valuable consumer because it is not only important to be successful but to appear successful. When her start-up gets its feet off the ground, she also becomes a job creator.

What about India, the country of origin, which paid for her first education? And also the parents who paid her tuition at an American university? Ishani is still young, and if her success continues, she will undoubtedly support her parents financially in the future, and thus also the Indian economy. And who knows – maybe she will return to Mumbai one day with her Silicon Valley experience and help boost a few Mumbai unicorns.

The story of Ihor

Ihor is from near Lugansk in Ukraine. He first arrived in Estonia for an extended period in 2014, when his hometown became a war zone and he fled to his distant relatives in Estonia. Here he applied for asylum and received subsidiary protection status and a one-year residence permit. A year later, the hostilities had subsided, he returned to his homeland and began to rebuild his household. During his time in Estonia, he had found a job in a production plant, where he still works from time to time. He pays his taxes in Estonia, but spends modestly here, to take as much as possible of his earned income back to his hometown. We can say that the economic impact of Ihor's migration is also positive: Estonia will occasionally get an additional taxpayer, who will not cost much in terms of public services, but who will help alleviate labour shortages. The guest workforce also helps maintain the Estonian production plant, which does not have to move production abroad due to a lack of labour, and therefore several well-paid jobs are preserved in Estonia. However, Ukraine maintains its population, does not spend significantly on public services and Ihor stimulates the local economy as a consumer because the earnings he brings from Estonia are several times higher than the income that a citizen working in Ukraine could direct into the economy.

The story of Husain

Husain is a qualified engineer but was forced to flee his homeland. He took refuge in Germany, but because he did not speak the local language, his labour market prospects were narrow. In the end, however, he managed to get a job on a farm. Husain's work could also be called a 3D job, where working is dangerous, dirty and demeaning. The locals no longer wanted this work because it is a dead-end job – it is almost impossible to make a career from this position, the days are long and the salary is low. In a way, the German economy wins from the situation: Husain's willingness to work for less than the locals allows others to acquire cheaper products and services. Husain paid all the taxes from his payroll so all in all, his contribution was modest but varied.

But ten years later, the company reorganised its production processes and Husain was laid off. He still doesn't speak the local language because he worked alone and it was not possible to take language courses because of long working hours. While he holds an engineering degree from decades ago, those skills no longer meet current demands for another job. As a result, the costs involved with him are higher: he must at least initially rely on unemployment benefits, and he requires an investment for retraining and language studies. Understandably, however, his motivation to retrain before retirement is rather modest.

The story of Nina

Nina wants to move to Estonia with her husband. Nina has a degree in chemistry but has not worked in the field. Instead, she has worked as a beautician for the past seven years. Nina had decided to move to Estonia only after finding a suitable job. She has sent her resume to several Estonian companies but has not yet received a suitable offer. But then she finds out that she is pregnant and therefore wants to go to her husband regardless. Nina receives a residence permit, and for the first year and a half, she is a cost rather than revenue for Estonia. At the same time, her husband continues to work in Estonia and, in economic terms, contributes for his entire family. During her parental leave, Nina diligently studies Estonian, and when the child goes to kindergarten, she also finds a professional job. Of course, the wages in beauty services are not very large and her taxes will probably not set off all the costs of public services that her family has received.

Thus, the economic impact of migration in individual cases can be both highly positive or highly negative and can change significantly over time. Certainly, this also varies from country to country: where a country's welfare expenditure is lower and the destination country is still attractive to highly skilled migrants, the economic impact is also higher than average. However, a generous welfare state tends to stay on the negative side, although on average the economic impact of migration is usually somewhere close to equilibrium.

Discussion points

- Based on [Estonian migration statistics](#), create a migrant persona (for both immigrants and emigrants) and analyse their economic impact: how they contribute to the Estonian economy as participants of the labour market, taxpayers and consumers, and what costs are related to the public services they need.
- Based on a cost-benefit calculation, could countries allow only high added-value economic migration and completely ban family migration and receiving refugees? Discuss how important you think economic arguments should be in shaping national migration policy, and whether and which arguments should be taken into account.

Further reading

The Oxford University Migration Observatory has compiled a brief overview of key facts about the [impact of immigration on the British labour market](#).

A short overview of immigrant participation in the Estonian labour market in 2000–2017 can be found in [the summary of RITA RÄNNE](#).

World Bank statistics on foreign remittances can be found [here](#).



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10. THE IMPACT OF MIGRATION ON SOCIETY

Mari-Liis Jakobson

The impact of migration doesn't always translate into money and, in addition to the economic impact of migration, it is important to analyse how migration affects society. In this chapter, you will find answers to the question of why some people perceive migration more positively or negatively. We will also discuss the relationship between the labour market and migration, the spatial location and migration of people, and the population pyramid and migration.

In its complexity, society is comparable to an ecosystem. Both are built on biodiversity and equilibrium. Rapid change and imbalances create stress in the ecosystem. Of course, this is not always bad; stress is often also a driving force that helps make leaps in development.

If you are asked whether migration affects society more positively or negatively, what would you answer? Migration never affects society at large in the same way; there are always those who experience more of the positive effects of migration and those who endure more of the negative effects of migration. Therefore, we can assume that your answer may deviate in either direction.

Migration as a for resilience booster for societies

Many people see migration as a phenomenon that makes the world broader, more cohesive and more diverse. Migration makes societies more dynamic and doesn't allow them to lose resilience, because leaving the original state of equilibrium creates the need to adapt, and it isn't only the migrant who has to adapt.

Cultural diversity brings new tastes and new cultural experiences – which is why we travel to distant countries as tourists, for example. Migration creates bridges between different societies. These bridges are crossed by not only financial remittances but also experiences, traditions, skills and knowledge. Thanks to migration, we learn to cook differently, work or spend leisure time in a different manner. For example, Estonians who have worked in Finland have brought a different work culture to the Estonian construction sector, such as the more consistent habit of using safety equipment. Sometimes, migration experiences can change the world much more fundamentally. For example, how was the billion-dollar money transfer platform Wise born? Of course, from a context well known to many migrants, where banks charged a hefty service fee for transferring money between their bank accounts in Estonia and England. Today, such financial technologies no longer only affect the lives and finances of migrants; they also impact on many others who operate in international business, use foreign services or goods, and indirectly all customers of traditional banking.

However, a migrant is not merely a bearer of his/her national culture or traditions. Nor is a society divided solely based on what one eats for breakfast or whether one celebrates Christmas, Ramadan or Diwali. Migration is also associated with the broader growth of diversity in society, the emergence of a so-called intersectional society, where a person has many different bases for belonging to different small identity groups. The concept of intersectionality is used to talk about diversity within

groups, but also about inequality. Society is not just divided into a few large groups, such as men and women, young and old, immigrants and locals. There are overlaps and significant internal differences between all these groups. So we can say that some Estonians and Indians share a much larger common ground than with some of their compatriots. They may have similar life experiences or, for example, similar higher education, work in the same sector and, in addition, follow the same series on Netflix.

To put it simply, migration is perceived more positively by people whose identities are based on what they do.

Migration as a challenge to communitarianism

But there are also people with a different outlook on life: those who value *belonging* somewhere over *doing* something. Many people, both migrants and non-migrants, are communitarian in their way of life and attitude towards life: their self-identity is based first and foremost on where they belong. Above all, it is important for them to be surrounded by the usual language, culture, customs and people they consider their kin. Such a model of society also has important advantages: [research](#) shows that in a more homogeneous society, trust and solidarity are easier to develop. For these members of the community, multiculturalism is a disorder in the usual social pattern and an unpleasant source of stress, rather than a mediator of resilience.

By the way, not only those who consider themselves indigenous want to belong to their community. Many migrants abroad do the same. Migrants seek a familiar cultural environment for exactly the same reasons: habit, community support, reducing stress from a foreign environment. True, different communitarian views tend to collide here. While liberal communitarians tend to value different communities and communitarianism equally, national communitarianism is based on the premise that the world is divided into different national communities with their settlements, where one national culture has a clear privilege over another and so-called other cultures do not have such a privilege in the same territory.

It is also not uncommon for conflicts and prejudices to arise between different minority groups. For example, the fear of immigration in Estonia has been even greater among the Russian-speaking population. Public opinion polls conducted in [2014–2016](#) on the attitude of the Estonian population towards refugees indicated that non-Estonians, who generally consider migration and open borders as positive, perceived the settlement of refugees (from the Middle East) in Estonia as a threat to the state and security. They were more fearful than Estonians of the ghettoisation of refugees' living areas and the non-integration of refugees, and the potential contribution of refugees to Estonian society was assessed to be lower.

Reasons for xenophobia

Xenophobia is known to have roots other than deeper core values (which you will learn more about in **Chapter 13, "Migration and Public Opinion"**). One reason is psychological: xenophobia can result from prejudice, which in turn stems from ignorance. Psychologist Gordon Allport has formulated a [contact hypothesis](#), which assumes that when social contacts arise between different social groups, prejudices

disappear. But these contacts must be substantive: for example, working in the same team, friendships, joint activities in an apartment association. And it is also influenced by general social attitudes. Seeing a cashier of a different skin colour in the store usually doesn't break down prejudices alone.

Another possible explanation is related to social stratification. Segmented labour market theory says that the labour market is broadly divided into at least two categories. The jobs in the higher category ensure greater social mobility, i.e., the opportunity to climb the career ladder. These are often white-collar jobs or jobs that require qualifications. In these occupations, you can make a career or run a successful business and earn a decent salary.

In the lower segment of the labour market, there are simpler and less prestigious jobs that do not guarantee much social mobility: when working in this category, it is generally not possible to advance your career or climb higher in the social hierarchy. With the development of technology, there is also a greater risk that such jobs will one day disappear altogether.

A segmented labour market creates a stratified society. There is nothing strange about that in itself. Some inequality is inevitable in societies; one might say it's even natural. But it is equally inevitable that such inequality of opportunities will lead to conflicts.

Everyone would like their descendants, if not themselves, to end up in the upper segment of the labour market. Recent immigrants do not usually compare themselves in the host society context, but those who have lived in the host country for longer certainly do. And so there is a close race: those who are already in the upper segment try to stay there, and those who are in the lower segment try to climb up.

The segmented assimilation theory points out that immigrants merge into their specific labour market so to say, and it is very difficult to move on, even for the next generations. As a significant part of migration is related to the filling of jobs in the lower segment, and stratification significantly affects the attitudes of both immigrants and the main population. And, as discussed in **Chapter 9, "The Economic Impact of Migration"**, migration affects local people at the lower end of the labour market more negatively than other groups in society.

Perhaps that is why xenophobia is more widespread among people working in the lower segment of the labour market. Sociologist [Arlie Hochschild](#), in her book *Strangers in Their Own Land: Anger and Mourning on the American Right*, has explained xenophobia by the fact that these people feel that although they have toiled and worked hard their entire lives (i.e. have been waiting in line for a better life), they are somehow falling behind and begin feeling that all kinds of minorities, including immigrants, are cutting the line. Minorities who have always been regarded as inferior are suddenly seen in the midst of Hollywood glamour or as top executives of big companies. And so some people question what right the minorities had to reach the higher labour market segment, while their own standard of living has even deteriorated. And in many advanced economies, such as the United States, this gap in the well-being of the upper and lower segments of the labour market has indeed widened significantly.

Migration and spatial segregation

A segmented labour market can easily produce a spatially segregated society and influence where immigrants move. It has been observed that while locals, wherever possible, tend to live in more upmarket and more desirable living areas, immigrants – especially when coming from a lower-income country and doing easier work – value cheaper housing. Therefore, locals move away from less prestigious neighbourhoods and new immigrants take their place. If such regional inequalities are not consciously reduced, the result will be spatial segregation and spontaneously emerging immigrant neighbourhoods.

Of course, this picture can change over generations. If social mobility allows, and if the second generation of immigrants, for example, are able to move up in the socio-economic hierarchies, they will usually move elsewhere as well. However, they will be replaced by the next new immigrants. And tensions between different immigrant communities will grow. For example, many Estonians living in Finland are hostile towards intercultural immigrants, probably much more hostile than the majority of local Finns (or even Estonians living in Estonia). It is because they perceive them as competition for the same territory.

Migration and the population pyramid

One area that expects to reap the benefits from migration is connected to the aging population and the declining population of people of working age.

Many highly developed countries are struggling with declining birth rates and an aging population, leading to a shortage of working-age people to help offset the costs of retirement benefits. Immigration seems to be a very favourable solution here, because in essence the country can import labour and taxpayers, who themselves – as people of the best working age – bring along very little social costs for the host country (no need to pay for their upbringing and education, and healthcare and other costs are also low). In this way, the social tax deficit of the host society can be compensated for over the years, or even a few decades. However, it should not be forgotten that these immigrants will also one day be old and someone will have to pay their pensions as well. And [studies](#) don't show that immigration increases birth rates in destination countries.

Thus, migration can affect society in many different ways at the same time, and certainly never affects society as a whole in the same way. But are there also ways to minimise the negative effects of migration? This will be discussed in **Chapter 11, "Integration and Adaptation"**.

Discussion points

- Discuss what Estonian society as a whole gains and/or loses from immigration. Who is more on the side of the winners and what do they win? Who sees migration from the losing side, why and what do they lose?
- In your opinion, to what extent is the segmented labour market theory valid in Estonia, and can segmented assimilation be seen here as well? Can you draw parallels between Estonia and the United States?

Further reading

The topic of the social impact of migration was reflected in several areas in the *Estonian Human Development Report 2016/2017*: <https://www.2017.inimareng.ee/>. Read, for example, Allan Puur's chapter on demographic change, Kadri Leetmaa's chapter on the spatial location of linguistic communities living in Estonia, Ellu Saar's and Jelena Helemäe's chapter on labour market segregation, Kaire Pöder's, Triin Lauri's and Leen Rahnu's chapter on immigrants' school choices, and Anastassia Zabrodskaia's chapter on the identity of Estonian residents.



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11. INTEGRATION AND ADAPTATION

Mari-Liis Jakobson

One process that helps keep increasingly diverse societies together is integration. But what is it exactly? In this chapter, you will get acquainted with different understandings of integration. You will also find out what hinders integration and why it doesn't always occur straight away, and you will also get a little idea of the integration policy in Estonia.

Integration seems to be everywhere today: today's schools practice integrated learning or tasks that involve, for example, studying both music and mathematics at the same time; kitchen appliances can often be integrated into kitchen cabinets so that on an external inspection it's not clear which door could hide the dishwasher or refrigerator. In the case of societies, too, there is growing talk of integration and cohesion at a social, cultural, economic and any other level. In essence, integration means striving for cohesion. Societal integration therefore means that different people and different groups have contacts and connections that create a sense of a common and whole society. Integration does not necessarily result in a society where everyone is friends, rather a society in which all groups participate more equally in different areas and no one is completely cut off: for example, so that no-one is excluded from the labour market, political or social life, or cultural experiences, due to their age, gender, origin, place of residence or social class. Certainly, integration does not remove the boundaries or inequalities of social groups – young people remain young and the old are old, the rich are richer and the poor are poorer. However, regardless of income, age or origin people should perceive themselves as full members of society and be able to participate in various areas of social life accordingly.

Integration can be a spontaneous and even an inevitable process. It occurs on a daily basis. Unless completely separate parallel societies have emerged within one society, different people will inevitably meet in a shop, at the hairdresser's, at school or workplace, and somehow a common language must be found. And not just literally. However, integration is also something that various policies try to encourage or accelerate.

Different views on integration

Integration can also be understood differently. It certainly isn't a neutral word: for some, it is associated with something very good, for others it is negative. Why? Because integration is always somewhat connected to power relations. Does integration mean that I have to learn your language, or does it mean that you have to learn mine? Who says how to dress and behave at school or work, for example? And do we get a day off when it is my holiday or yours? Also, perceptions of integration have changed a lot over time.

Assimilationism

In the middle of the 20th century, an assimilative view of integration emerged in the United States as well as in the Soviet Union, for example. In essence, assimilation means dissolving into a larger whole, i.e., taking over a so-called common identity, customs and language of the host state. The United

States has long been described as a melting pot of nations, where people from different backgrounds and cultures arrive, but out of the [melting pot](#) emerge Americans with the same language, culture and values. The Brezhnev-era Soviet Union tried to do the same: to introduce a common language of administration (Russian) in all the republics of the Union and to create a real *homo Sovieticus* (the "Soviet man") in terms of values. But for Estonians, a minority on the large scale of the Soviet Union, it did not seem like a positive project of building a common identity, but rather as Russification. And in some places, such a policy of merging led to the strengthening of ethnic identities and the desire of minorities to stand out.

[In classical approaches to assimilation](#) (for example, in the 1964 book *Assimilation in America* by the American sociologist Milton M. Gordon), it was important to overcome cultural differences in the first phase. It was assumed that once a person had mastered the language and culture, he/she could begin to assimilate in all other fields of life as well: he/she would participate in the labour market, move in the social hierarchy and get ready to enter into a mixed marriage. Of course, such assimilation is difficult at first, because not all differences can be eliminated. For example, if you have different skin colour or speak the language with an accent, you will still have to endure certain prejudices and even discrimination, but this will probably reduce over time.

Assimilation has been criticised quite a lot because, although there is talk of creating a common identity, it often refers to the identity of the dominant group, which also establishes the group's privileged position, such as in the labour market and elsewhere. Largely counterbalanced by assimilation, a multicultural view of society emerged, approaching integration from the position of minority culture. Criticism of assimilation is summed up nicely by a [caricature](#), where a monkey, an elephant, a fish and other animals have to take an exam: climb a tree. Of course, the monkey succeeds without any effort, but the penguin or fish will probably fail the exam even if they do nothing but practice. One could say that the creator of this caricature is an advocate of multiculturalism, who draws attention to the shortcomings of assimilation: seemingly equal treatment still creates hierarchy and inequality in society.

Multiculturalism

But what is the positive programme of multiculturalism? In essence, multiculturalism means that everyone has the right to be as they are: to speak their language, to practice their culture, to wear appropriate clothing or religious symbols, but most importantly, to value the right of others to do the same.

But the multicultural approach has also been highly criticised, and rightly so. By focusing on the differences, the commonalities tend to be left out of the picture. When each ethnic group communicates in its language and cultivates its culture, there are no experiences that integrate different groups of society. Rather, tribalistic instincts emerge and thus people become clustered in parallel societies. For example, how have so-called immigrant districts emerged in the Nordic countries? It is not just the result of natural economic processes, but a fully conscious [policy](#) pursued in the 1970s. At the time, it was thought that it's a very good idea for immigrants from one region to live together and create their own community because that way they could support each other, practice their "exotic" culture and avoid cultural conflicts with locals.

In part, there is some truth in that – communities function based on ethnic capital, which means that group membership ensures that other members of the group are willing to help you cope. But it was overlooked that such encapsulation could instead exacerbate cultural conflicts because, in a broader

sense, different groups still remain economically unequal, for example. The fact that one member of a minority group helps another member of a minority group to find accommodation and employs him/her as a dishwasher does not mean that they do not sense inequality compared to a member of the dominant group who has an opportunity to rise to a much higher position. So even if an elephant can travel long distances in the savannah and a fish can swim, the winner will still be the monkey because he is the only one who can climb to where the bananas are.

Interculturalism

Therefore, in many regions we are moving in the third and even the fourth direction, and we call this Interculturalism and neo-assimilation. According to the intercultural approach, the basic precondition for integration is that people form networks and interact with others across group boundaries. Gordon Allport has formulated [the contact hypothesis](#), which claims that contact between people from the majority group and the minority group reduces prejudices. And not just for this one minority group, but for minorities in general. Subsequent studies have shown that contact alone does not necessarily bring about immediate change, as the content and duration of contact is also important. The overcoming prejudices is also significantly influenced by context: for example, the strength of ethnic or origin-based confrontations in society at large, whether immigration or minority issues are currently highly politicised, or is the background more neutral. Therefore, certain prejudices may persist regardless of contacts and a fairly cohesive society, but as a result of contacts, empathy will certainly develop over time, and minority standpoints begin to get more acknowledgement in the broader society.

In conclusion, interculturalists believe that the precondition for integration is creating opportunities to interact with each other – be it a common school network, even if children learn in different languages, leisure opportunities, services or something else. Therefore, integration is driven by companies with a multicultural workforce, or school-age children, who not only integrate themselves but also their parents into intercultural networks.

In Estonia, too, the focus of several integration plans has been on increasing contacts between the Russian-speaking and Estonian-speaking populations. Many publicly funded [cultural and sports projects](#) have served this purpose. However, in the Danish capital, Copenhagen, a large-scale housing project has been launched to build new community centres, such as libraries and sports facilities, especially in former immigrant districts, and at the same time, affordable housing is added for people of different origin to diversify the communities. This creates the preconditions for contacts between groups, which can help integrate society more.

Neo-assimilationism

However, there is a perception that when criticising assimilation, we are ignoring a valid point. A certain common language and civic culture are still necessary for deepening contacts and reducing inequalities. But it is also understood that this civic culture must not be cultivated unilaterally, from a dominant group perspective, or as a top down state project; it must be comfortable for everyone to engage there. This is the mindset of neo-assimilation: a kind of compromise between multiculturalism and assimilationism.

The principle of neo-assimilation is this: as little should be prescribed regarding integration as possible but at the same time as much as necessary. The goals are no longer as ambitious as those of designing a Soviet man or creating a melting pot. Instead, the aim is to agree on the minimum that different groups in society, whatever their distinction, should certainly do in the same way, but otherwise everyone has the right to live their lives exactly as they wish. For example, there should be a common language which everyone commands at least on a basic level to get by with everyday activities; and that all residents respect the country's constitutional order and regard it important to abide by its laws. But in which language they communicate in their free time or what religion they practice is everyone's free choice.

The neo-assimilation approach is also quite popular in Estonia. The majority of integration policy measures focus on supporting language learning and adapting new immigrants to the local administrative environment. On the one hand, language acquisition is one of the most demanding integration measures for people with another mother tongue (which is why it is understandable why the state tries to support it in many ways), but on the other hand, it is also one of the most effective preconditions for people to forge cross-cultural contacts in the society. However, language skills also provide more equal opportunities in the labour market as [integration monitoring studies](#) suggest. Adaptation support, which helps newcomers cope with local matters and introduces the basic legal and behavioural norms specific to Estonia, does not require much effort from the immigrant but it creates a basic minimum for the society to function harmoniously.

True, even this minimum common ground is often difficult to agree on. What is the necessary minimum and who do these rules resemble more? The whole process is made even more difficult by identity politics surrounding ethnic relations. From time to time, there are representatives of both majority and minority groups who say that finding common ground or allowing differences is somehow dangerous for them. Some say that wearing a burqa humiliates women, others say that banning the burqa embarrasses them and yet others ask that if burqas are banned, why can people still expose crosses around their necks? Some say that the future career opportunities of children attending a Russian-language school are compromised because they don't learn Estonian. Others say that sending Russian-speaking children to an Estonian-language school threatens their career opportunities because their academic success in other subjects is poorer. However, yet others say that Russian-speaking children in Estonian-language schools threaten the academic success of Estonian-speaking children instead.

There is an old Estonian saying that fear has big eyes. And, of course, we are not the only ones who have realised this fact. The Japanese, for example, say that fear blows the wind into the sails.

And fear does not help integration at all. The Spaniards have a proverb that fear and love never eat from the same plate.

But fears can be overcome. Cameroonians have a saying that if a panther knew how much he was feared, he would do much more harm. Consequently, is it possible to overcome this fear?

Discussion points

- Discuss how the views of multiculturalists and assimilationists on integration differ. What would a society following a fully assimilationist doctrine be like? What are its pros and cons? But what is a completely multicultural country like? What are the pros and cons of this way of life?
- Try to create an integration policy for your society. Formulate an integration problem in your home area or in Estonia as a whole and discuss how it could be solved.

Further reading

A more thorough approach to integration in Estonian can be found in Chapter 15 "Rahvusriik ja mitmekultuurilisus" of the university textbook *Poliitika ja valitsemise alused* (editors Leif Kalev and Anu Toots).

Estonian integration plans are available on the website of the Ministry of Culture: <https://www.kuL.ee/kultuuriline-mitmekesisus-ja-loimumine/strateegilised-dokumendid/sidusa-eesti-arengukava-2021-2030>.

One important gateway to integration services in Estonia is the Integration Foundation: <https://integratsioon.ee/>.



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12. CLIMATE MIGRATION

Mari-Liis Jakobson

What do you associate with climate migration? Is it the pleasant Mediterranean climate, Californian palm trees or Thai sandy beaches? Or drought, floods and barren farmland instead? The climate is causing more people to move, and unfortunately mostly for the gloomier reasons. It is even thought that in the 21st century, the climate could become, directly or indirectly, the main cause of migration. But who is migrating, from where and how exactly? Is the world ready for climate refugees?

Predictions about the impact of climate change on migration do not bode well. Norman Myers, a professor at Oxford University, has estimated that by 2050 there are likely to be 200 million climate refugees in the world – almost half of the EU population. [200 million](#) people will be forced to leave their homes due to drought, floods, declining soil fertility, pollution or other natural disasters.

Of course, Myers' calculation is not the only one, and estimates from different authors using different methodologies vary widely, from 25 million to a billion climate refugees by 2050. The International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has even estimated that by 2080, as many as a third of the world's population (3.2 billion people) will suffer from water scarcity, plus hundreds of millions more will be at risk of food insecurity due to climate change. UN-Water has estimated that by 2050, [half](#) of the world's population could suffer from water shortages. In 2020 alone, there were an estimated [30 million](#) more climate refugees in the world.

Climate change as a cause of migration

But let's put the calculations aside for a moment. Let us look at what climate migration is all about, how these 200 million could start moving and what to do about it.

First, there is nothing new in climate migration per se. Floods, volcanic eruptions or desertification have caused people to move throughout human history. In the last 7,000 years, since people have begun building bigger cities, it has happened that clean water has run out or the land has become less fertile in densely populated areas.

The easiest solution has been to move on. Today, however, human settlements are denser and there are no more free patches of fertile land that no one owns yet. And very few countries allow foreigners on their territory just because they no longer have a liveable environment in their home country.

Climate change is still a long-term change and does not appear out of the blue. Although a single flood, hurricane or forest fire can leave thousands homeless at once, its impact on a global scale is still small. In most cases, those fleeing sudden climate disasters also find shelter quite close by and only move tens, not hundreds or thousands, of kilometres, and return home as soon as possible.

Climate change will never create a situation where there are 10, 20 or 200 million people at the border tomorrow and all fleeing at once. Instead, people move gradually and often hope to return one day.

Commuting and breeding against climate migration

Let's look at a family who lives somewhere in Central America and makes a living from farming by growing coffee and sugar cane. In recent years, *El Niños* – a set of weather phenomena that warms the air off the coast of South America and brings rainfall there, but significantly reduces rainfall in Central America – have severely damaged their crops and they can no longer survive on agriculture alone. Therefore, the father decides together with his neighbour to look for the same kind of work up north, where the climatic conditions are better, but the salary is also higher. So, the two leave for climate-change induced reasons, but most family members still stay in their home village. They maintain the farm because it is part of their lifestyle, and in-between seasons, the father can return home to his family. Financial security is ensured by remittances from the father working abroad. As in **Chapter 3, "Why Do People Migrate?"**, it is possible that the migration of one family member will not make others move – maybe some of the children will be sent to study in the city with the additional money made abroad, or maybe the children will decide to go and look for happiness elsewhere, which still means migration. But this is a rather thin though continuous trickle, not a giant tidal wave.

Based on this logic, schemes that enable seasonal labour migration have also been proposed as one of the possible measures to mitigate climate migration. In essence, it will help farming communities survive until plant varieties that are better adapted to the new climatic conditions are developed or other new livelihoods are found in the area.

A new way of urban planning and sustainable migration

However, climate change can have a much gloomier facet and more drastic consequences. Let's take a trip to Bangladesh in South Asia, which is about three times larger than Estonia, but whose population is more than a hundred times bigger than in Estonia. Bangladesh is located by the sea, at the delta of large rivers, which means that the land there is very low-lying. And although there have always been temporary floods in the area, their scale and impact have become more devastating year by year. Already every few years, the whole region suffers from major floods that destroy hundreds of thousands of homes, fields and livestock. Floods make both the soil and the estuaries saline, making it difficult to cultivate the land and obtain clean drinking water. Coastal land is becoming worthless, local jobs are also being lost and coastal families are becoming climate migrants: when there is nowhere to live, the whole family escapes; if there is a place to live, some family members are sent to work in big cities or factories elsewhere. In Bangladesh, however, two scenarios show the importance of urban planning and other development plans in tackling climate migration.

Most of Bangladesh's climate refugees reach the slums of the capital, Dhaka – nearly [800,000](#) people a year. These are spontaneous giant villages that lack a proper electrical system as well as water supply and sanitation, where many become ill from contaminated water and mortality is many times higher than in rural areas. People move into the slums to work in factories in the city or to do housework in local middle-class homes. The city is not at all interested in improving the quality of life in the slums, as this would mean legalising the area and additional costs. Therefore, the situation doesn't improve and only charity organisations keep it from getting even worse.

But there is another, more controlled way to deal with climate migration. In Bangladesh, the port city of [Mongla](#) is already being deliberately developed as a potential destination for climate migration. And what is being built there? Of course, shore fortifications to protect the city from floods, but they

are also planning infrastructure and housing, as well as factories to have jobs, and the tourism industry and the port area are also being developed. Everything is planned so that the city can expand in the future. Of course, the coastal areas of Bangladesh will not be completely wiped out. The breeding of salt-tolerant rice varieties is progressing and some fields flooded by the sea have been turned into shrimp farms.

Thus, a significant part of the problems of climate migration can be solved by careful planning, either in the surrounding areas or by reorganising life on site. In the field of insurance, ideas are also being developed to provide so-called climate change [insurance](#) for whole countries or certain regions. Regular insurance payments would ensure sufficient funds for adapting to climate change.

The uneven price of climate change

As seen in previous examples, climate change mostly affects developing countries, whose environmental footprint is often not comparable to that of developed countries. For example, [carbon emissions](#) in Latin America are many times lower than in the United States, but the effects of climate change are felt there more directly. At the same time, the consequences of climate change are not only tropical storms but also conflicts, the escalation of which is quite clearly correlated with the [occurrence of natural disasters](#).

We see a similar picture in the Sahel region of Africa, where the climate and conflicts have already forced [3.8 million](#) people to flee their homes and made 24 million dependent on foreign aid. For example, Lake Chad, on the border of Chad, Niger and Nigeria and once the largest lake in the world, has lost almost 90% of its area in just over 50 years. The resulting water shortage threatens both people's livelihoods and increases the level of conflict in the region. A similar fate befell Syria in the Middle East – the civil war that caused a large wave of emigration is widely associated with an exceptional drought from 2006 to 2011.

The African examples also show that circular migration from an already unstable region may not be the answer. You may have heard of Boko Haram, a terrorist group operating in northern Nigeria and the immediate region, which abducts women and children from villages. This has become particularly easy as a result of the climate crisis, as men have gone abroad to look for work to support their families at home.

In many African countries, awareness of about climate change is even less developed than in Europe, which means that there are no local mechanisms to protect oneself in times of crisis. If Estonia is hit by a significant decrease in agricultural yields due to unfavourable weather conditions, food will be imported from further away, which will probably mean an increase in food prices, but a drought will probably not cause mass casualties. Unfortunately, such solutions can't be implemented so easily in areas where there are no supermarkets, and above all people's survival depends on what can be grown locally.

Therefore, the depth of the climate crisis and the pressure of climate migration depend largely on the international community and international development cooperation. Developing countries alone may not be able to develop more climate-resilient crops or sufficiently effective crisis management measures. Several international organisations (such as the [Red Cross](#), but also in the [UN Security Council](#)) have concluded that, in addition to military assistance already provided in some vulnerable

areas, support for tackling climate change must also be arranged. For instance, peacekeepers have been fighting terrorism in Mali, but the cattle farmers there would also need protection against local bandits who have taken control of water sources.

Ironically, of course, climate change will not affect all regions in the same negative way. In some regions, such as [Canada](#) and [Russia](#), climate change may not only have a negative effect but also increase agricultural fertility. So, while climate change is threatening some regions with hunger, other hitherto sparsely populated areas have become more fertile than before. Thus, some international labour migration may even be necessary for destination countries. For example, the [UN Global Compact for Migration](#) calls on countries to establish channels for legal migration (e.g., seasonal or long-term migration schemes, resettlement of crisis victims) to prevent irregular and uncontrolled migration and to ensure that people can move between their jobs and families and thus avoid even greater international migration. On the other hand, more intensive agriculture in these areas may not be sustainable, as it leaves its mark on the environment.

But what to do in situations where climate change has essentially destroyed the land and nothing grows anymore? To this end, the United Nations has already begun to develop a strategy for the planned relocation of communities. In essence, this means, for example, evacuating an entire village at once and moving the same community to another location. This may sound rather dystopian, given what we have touched upon in **Chapter 11, "Integration and Adaptation"**, for example. The whole community at once? So how does it integrate into the rest of the society? The idea of the programme is to minimise the problems associated with migrants feeling like they're lacking roots. Not everyone adapts well to change, and forced leave can create a sense of giving up. Moving communities as a whole will create the necessary safety net that is initially needed to get on one's feet. But, of course, even with such a solution, you have to think two steps ahead to what will become of these communities in 10 years or within a generation, and how to ensure social integration. These migrants will probably not have the opportunity to return.

Discussion points

- As mentioned in the chapter, the effects of climate change on developed and developing countries are often relatively different. Discuss how climate migration could affect developed and developing countries.
- The chapter introduced various solutions to prevent climate-induced migration crises. Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of different options from the perspective of potential migrants, countries of origin and destination countries.

Further reading

Website of Climate Refugees, an advocacy organisation dedicated to climate refugees with a variety of thematic and up-to-date reading and listening topics: <https://climate-refugees.org>

IOM Climate Migration Report: https://www.ipcc.ch/apps/njlite/srex/njlite_download.php?id=5866

Activities and challenges of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in managing climate migration: <https://www.unhcr.org/climate-change-and-disasters.html>



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13. MIGRATION AND PUBLIC OPINION

Mari-Liis Jakobson

Did you know that sometimes immigration can affect societies even if they have no immigrants? Through public opinion, of course. As you know, in a democratic society, public opinion has a significant impact on which migration or integration policies are pursued. But how does public opinion develop? How does it change over time? And what role does the media play?

Public opinion is the collective opinion of members of society on a specific topic and is measured by various types of public opinion polls. Public opinion is never a common opinion shared across society, but rather the sum of the views of different people. Therefore, it is always diverse and divided in one way or another.

When talking about the formation of public opinion, it is important to understand it as a multi-layered phenomenon. Let's say that public opinion is like a nesting doll, the inner layer of which is core values, the middle layer is attitudes and the outer layer is opinions. Core values are relatively unchanged or change marginally over time. There are many different classifications of values and we will not delve into these. But let's have some examples: a person is either more open to change or considers it a negative phenomenon, how much importance does one attribute to social status and dominance over others, the personal need for achievement, stability, and security or the opportunity to set goals or create something on your own. No core value in itself makes a person feel positive or negative towards migration. However, these core values can be activated in different ways. More on that below.

The middle layer of the nesting doll could be called attitudes or mindset. Attitudes are also shaped by one's social environment, such as the attitudes of the people around us or the experiences we have, such as contacts with migrants or migration.

Consequently, it is possible to change attitudes, but to what extent, varies from person to person. People can be divided into **four groups** in terms of their attitudes towards migration:

- One relatively small group is made up of people who have a clearly positive attitude towards this issue: in their view, migration is more of a socially enriching or necessary phenomenon, or at least it does not deprive anyone of anything important.
- The second also relatively small group is made up of people who have a fundamentally negative attitude towards migration: in their understanding, migration is undesirable, or even dangerous.
- The third and larger group contains information seekers: they do not have a very clear attitude towards migration, so they can in principle be persuaded in both directions, but above all, they want to make an informed decision.
- The fourth and largest group consists of doubters, who also do not have a clear attitude, but are more difficult to persuade because they are not looking for information.

We now reach the outer layer of our nesting doll – public opinion. In addition to people's individual core values and attitudes, public opinion is influenced by everything that happens around us every

day: what events take place, what aspects of migration is the media focusing on (and how much is migration covered), what messages we send on the subject and so on. Therefore, public opinion is also much more volatile than core values or attitudes and can change in days, especially at the expense of the group of information seekers and doubters.

Public opinion usually also concerns some specific issues and is not an abstract positive or negative feeling. For example, in a public opinion poll, people may be asked whether Estonia should allow more labour migration than it currently does. Public opinion research has shown that a large proportion of people do not have an established opinion on any given issue and can therefore change their minds. In some situations, this question may also be answered negatively by someone who would otherwise have a positive attitude towards migration (for example, because unemployment in the country has risen sharply), but it is not impossible that someone who does not consider migration a good thing thinks that labour migration is necessary for some professions given the current situation. The unchanged core values do not provide a single answer either, as different messages and topics [activate](#) different core values.

Trends in migration attitudes in Europe

Both public opinion and attitudes are most often measured through surveys (although sometimes through experiments or more in-depth interviews). And, of course, the answer depends significantly on the question. As a result, surveys can sometimes yield results that seem contradictory at first glance. For example, [surveys](#) show that Europeans were much more sceptical than Americans about admitting new immigrants. However, answers to the questions of whether immigrants (already in the country) are seen more positively or negatively showed a much more positive attitude. It is also worth noting that attitudes towards immigrants in Europe have generally become more [positive](#) in recent decades. There are a few countries, such as Austria, Hungary, Czechia and Italy, where this attitude has for various reasons moved in the opposite direction, but in all other countries, including Estonia, the number of those who are more positive about migration has increased slightly. How to explain this? The 2010s cannot be considered an idyllic time in the field of migration – Europe was hit by the Mediterranean migration crisis, anti-immigration movements appeared in many places and Brexit was greatly influenced by opposition to Eastern European immigration.

In general, it is possible to point out three reasons why people's attitudes towards migration have become more positive. The first cause and the one that is the slowest to take effect is related to demographic development. Current younger generations are much more positive about immigration than their predecessors because they are simply more accustomed to diversifying societies.

However, the number of young people in the population has decreased and this change alone doesn't explain everything. Attitudes have also become more positive in older age groups. This can in part be explained by the increase in intercultural contacts, but also in part by more well-considered migration and integration policies.

The third and perhaps most paradoxical reason is the emergence of anti-immigration parties. Namely, research shows that while on average 10–20% of the population is very receptive to the messages of radical right-wing parties and their attitudes towards migration have become strongly negative, there are far more people who have become convinced opponents of such movements and therefore tend to see migration in a more positive light.

Migration coverage on (social) media

But let's look at the more volatile surface layer of public opinion. How does the media influence public opinion on migration? For example, the tone of articles on migration in the media has been studied and it has been concluded that migration is more often portrayed [negatively](#).

In addition to the professional press, which has the task of verifying allegations and reflecting the views of the various parties, there is an increasing amount of non-journalistic media content, both completely positive and non-critical, as well as negative and intimidating. Such content is especially common on social media. If you often see negative migration posts on social media, it is either due to which posters or groups you have selected yourself, or the algorithm suggests material similar to what you've viewed before. By the way, many social media algorithms are structured so that they [recommend](#), above all, content that has caused strong reactions in people. And the strongest and most memorable emotions are negative.

However, if we look at professional journalism, negatively charged news tends to be predominant here as well, especially during the so-called [European migration crisis](#). So why all these negative stories? The reason lies in the content production logic of the press. The most important tool of a journalist is newsworthiness. This is the threshold that determines what is written about and which stories go unreported. Stories that are current, extraordinary, concern prominent people, contain conflict, have a great impact on society or whose events take place close to the reader are considered newsworthy. Therefore, migration is often talked about sensationally, through conflicts, or in an attempt to emphasise the great impact of migration on society. And it is often easier to do this by using a negative tone.

Negative media content is often more prevalent in commercial channels than in public service media. It also illustrates the potential impact of media ownership on content: privately owned channels are mostly aimed at making a profit for the owner, and therefore more emphasis is placed on sensationalism, which attracts the attention of consumers as well as advertisers.

To what extent does the media influence public opinion?

But to what extent can the tonality, sensationalism or scandals of the articles influence whether we think of migration positively or negatively? Studies of the impact of the media show that the deeper core values of a person generally cannot be affected by the media. However, the media can influence how much we think about migration, what we think about more specifically in relation to migration and also shape public opinion on some individual issues.

How much we think about migration is greatly influenced by the media, above all through their power of agenda setting. Editorial choices also influence what we think of when we think of migration: that is, which events are discussed by the wider public and which don't receive much attention.

It is possible to examine migration in very different contexts or [frames](#), in order to tell very different stories. If migration is constantly framed in economic terms – immigrants are seen first and foremost as a workforce and migration is linked to economic competitiveness, tax revenues and entrepreneurship – then people will also start to think about migration primarily from an economic perspective.

If migration is first and foremost framed through individual stories – each migrant has his/her own story, hopes, dreams, virtues and shortcomings, then society also accepts migrants more as a diverse group of individuals that aren't generalised. However, if migration is framed as a force of nature, for example – refugee masses flowing across borders, flooding asylum centres and creating problems that governments must address, then the social image also reflects migration as an anonymous mass that invades with the inevitable power of nature.

Of course, the media doesn't affect all of us in the same way: those who have an unwavering positive attitude towards migration will, in most cases, not change their disposition. And media coverage alone does not change the mindset of a person who has a negative attitude towards migration. The press may also raise issues that change their views on a particular issue (recall the earlier example of allowing labour migration), but in most cases, this does not affect attitudes. Instead, people with strong convictions find some other explanations for the media coverage that doesn't match their attitude: for example, that the media distorts reality for some reason.

However, the media can shape the opinions of people who do not have a strong position on migration issues, at least for a short time. Especially if they don't have direct contact with migrants or migration. For example, if we constantly hear that migration is the engine of economic growth, a person who doesn't have a very strong opinion about migration will associate it with something positive. At least until a different record is played. However, when migration is considered from day-to-day as a potential foreign threat, the hesitant attitude towards migration becomes cautious, to put it mildly.

Thus, a person who has a firm opinion or direct contact with migration doesn't generally re-evaluate his/her position simply because of the media content. But people are different, both in their attitudes and the level of its elaboration. And more important than the average opinion or how many people someone manages to convince is to have sufficient high-quality, varied and balanced information about migration. This will help avoid a situation where migration becomes a sensational one-frame issue. However, varied and balanced information also ensures that steadfast proponents, opponents and doubters of migration find a point of reference from which to have a meaningful dialogue.

Discussion points

- Analyse the coverage of migration in a media outlet. To do this, you can select an online news outlet (or a social media channel) of interest and search with the keyword "migration" etc. How many negative and positive articles do you find during the set period? (There are also certainly stories with a neutral tone.) How has migration been framed in these stories?
- Discuss, either based on the media coverage above or an article on migration, how these stories could affect public opinion. Whose opinions could be affected by such content and under what conditions? Does it only affect public opinion or also attitudes on migration or even core values?
- Find a public opinion poll on migration and discuss what factors may have influenced the results – for example, what was the role of the societal attitudes or deeper cultural experiences, what was the role of the background events of the time, media coverage, people's direct experiences or the wording of the question?

Further reading

A brief overview of various international opinion polls on migration can be found on the Migration Data Portal: <https://www.migrationdataportal.org/themes/public-opinion-migration>.

In the EU, including Estonia, attitudes towards migration are regularly monitored through Eurobarometer surveys. See the results here: <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/screen/home>.

In Estonia, public opinion polls on migration are occasionally commissioned by various organisations, but unfortunately, these are not conveniently in one place. One of the regularly occurring surveys that partly covers migration is the *Survey of Public Opinion on Internal Security* organised by the Ministry of the Interior (see the subsection "Settlement of People from Other Countries in Estonia"). The latest research reports can be found in the list of studies and analyses commissioned by the Ministry: <https://www.siseministeerium.ee/media/247/download>.



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