



Yearbook of the Institute of East-Central Europe (Rocznik Instytutu Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej)

Publication details, including instructions for authors:
<http://www.iesw.lublin.pl/rocznik/index.php>

The twin migration and refugee crises in Europe: examining the OECD's contribution to the debate

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Published online: 01 Oct 2016

To cite this article: Pachocka, M. (2016) 'The twin migration and refugee crises in Europe: examining the OECD's contribution to the debate', *Yearbook of the Institute of East-Central Europe* (Special Issue: Visvizi, A. (ed.) *Re-thinking the OECD's role in global governance: members, policies, influence*), 14(4): 71-99.

Yearbook of the Institute of East-Central Europe (Rocznik Instytutu Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej) is a quarterly, published in Polish and in English, listed in the IC Journal Master List (Index Copernicus International). In the most recent Ministry of Science and Higher Education ranking of journals published on the Polish market the *Yearbook of the Institute of East-Central Europe* received one of the highest scores, i.e. 14 points.

Marta Pachocka

The twin migration and refugee crises in Europe: examining the OECD's contribution to the debate

Abstract: In the light of the intensifying migration and refugee crises in Europe, various international stakeholders such as the UNHCR, the IOM and the EU have taken a stance in the debate. Among them, the OECD is the organization that stands out with its pragmatic policy-oriented approach rooted in its vast advisory experience, global outlook and socio-economic profile. A thorough examination of the OECD's contribution to the debate on the crises leads to the conclusions that migrants coming to Europe in large numbers in recent years, most of whom are in need of international protection, create an opportunity for improvements in the areas of demographic and economic development in Europe. However, in order to make adequate use of their potential for their own and their host countries' benefit, it is necessary that the European immigration and integration policies be revised and adapted to new political/legal conditions and economic circumstances.

Keywords: migration crisis, refugee crisis, integration policy, humanitarian migrants, OECD

Introduction

After the outbreak of the Arab spring in late 2010, the migration situation in the Mediterranean region changed significantly with the gradually increasing number of people arriving from North Africa and the Middle East to Europe. The numbers of migrants started to grow unprecedentedly only in 2014 on a year-to-year basis indicating the beginning of the multidimensional crisis. In a demographic sense it is a migration crisis, if we take into account the large-scale influx of newcomers to Europe in a short period of time. At the same time, it is the

largest refugee crisis since World War II, if we look at the increasing number of people moving from their country of origin or their most recent usual place of residence to seek international protection in European countries. In this latter context, this crisis is also referred to as an asylum or humanitarian one (see e.g. Pachocka, 2015c).

Since 2014, many comments and reactions to the migration and refugee crises have been observed. Stances have been taken and proposals of solutions have been communicated by different stakeholders, including international organizations such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the International Organization for Migration (IOM) or the European Union (EU) as well as platforms of international cooperation at different levels of institutionalization, such as the G20 or the Visegrad Group. The question of how to address the crisis has been raised also by research centres, think-tanks and academic journals (see also Pachocka, 2015a). A valuable contribution to the debate on the emergency related to the influx of migrants to Europe has been provided by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

The objective of this paper is to examine the position of the OECD towards the multi-faceted crisis in Europe and to rethink the OECD's contribution to the debate. It is argued that the OECD's approach towards the twin migration and refugee crises is very pragmatic and strongly policy-oriented and draws from more than half of a century of international analytical experience of the OECD in its advisory role with economy-related issues. This experience is what distinguishes the OECD from other international organizations such as the EU. Taking the crisis as a fact, the OECD points to the demographic and economic opportunities arising from the influx of the large number of migrants to Europe. The OECD notes that whether it will be possible to turn these opportunities into tangible benefits for European countries depends on an adequate revision and efficient implementation of national policies that focus on integrating the newcomers, particularly asylum-seekers and refugees. The adoption of this positive-impact mindset and proactive policy approach appears to be beneficial for both host countries and migrants. What is more, it can contribute to addressing some of the challenges Europe is facing today, like demographic ageing and depopulation. As such, it may become a stimulus for the continent's further socio-economic development.

The discussion in this paper is structured as follows. In order to understand the nature of the ongoing crisis in Europe, the paper starts with an overview of the migration and refugee landscape as it has unfolded since the intensification of the crisis in 2014. Then the in-depth analysis of the OECD approach towards the crisis is presented. Finally, that approach is discussed in the context of different attitudes of selected key international actors, including the UNHCR, the IOM, and the EU. Conclusions follow.

1. The migration and refugee landscape in Europe at the time of the 2014+ crisis

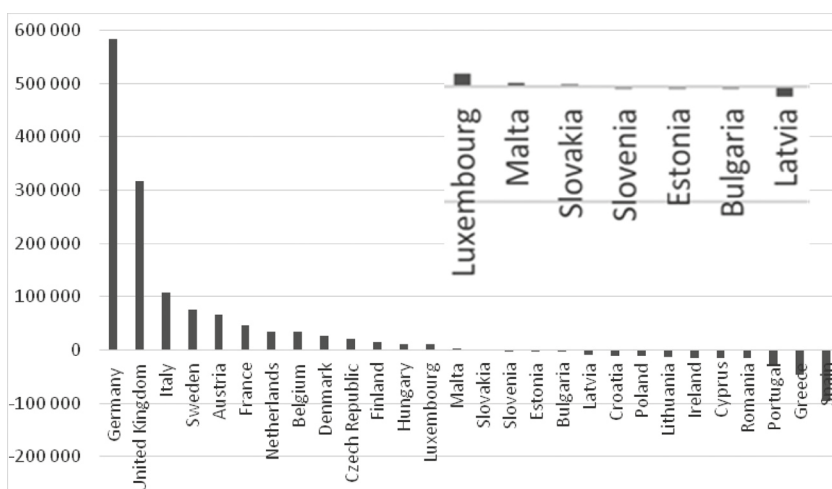
In accordance with the EU *acquis*, an 'immigrant' is a person establishing his or her usual residence in the territory of one of the member states for a period – actual or expected – of at least one year, having previously been usually resident in another member state or a third country (EU, 2007: art. 1 par. 1 (b) and (f)). This definition, therefore, refers to long-term migrants. Based on it, Eurostat provides a statistical picture of migratory flows to and from the EU and of migration population in its member states. It is worth noting that the Eurostat datasets based on this definition do not include figures on refugees and asylum seekers; neither do they reveal the size of irregular immigration. However, the statistics on international protection are available separately.

Recognizing the above-mentioned understanding of an 'immigrant', in line with the Eurostat data, about 3.8 million people immigrated to the 28 EU member states in 2014. This includes nationals of the reporting state¹ and of other EU member states, non-EU nationals, stateless persons and persons with unknown citizenship. Of the 3.8 million people that had immigrated, 1.6 million were nationals of non-EU states. The largest number of immigrants in absolute terms was recorded in Germany (884.9 thousand) and the United Kingdom (632 thousand). These two countries were followed by France (339.9 thousand), Spain (305.5 thousand) and Italy (277.6 thousand). To complete the picture, it is worth mentioning that the same year at least 2.8 million individuals left one of 28 EU member states. The top five emigration countries in the EU included respectively: Spain (400.4 thousand people), Germany (324.2 thousand), the United Kingdom (319.1 thousand),

France (294.1 thousand) and Poland (268.3 thousand). Moreover, according to the latest Eurostat data on migrant population in the EU, 34.3 million people living in one of the EU member states on 1 January 2015 were born outside of the EU-28, while those born in a different EU member state from the one of their current residence amounted to 18.5 million. In addition, there were 19.8 million persons residing in an EU member state who held citizenship of a third country² and 15.3 million people living in one of the EU member states who were citizens of another EU member state (Eurostat, 2016c).

In 2014, net migration plus statistical adjustment for the EU-28 amounted to 1.1 million persons, therefore the EU was a net immigration area (Figure 1). Slightly more than half of the EU-28 were countries of net immigration. This group, however, was diversified – the biggest absolute value was reached by Germany (583,503 people) and the smallest one by Slovakia (1,713 people). Among the 13 countries of net emigration, Slovenia was the country with the lowest net migration (-490 persons), while Spain noted the highest negative balance (-94,976 people).

Figure 1. Net migration plus statistical adjustment in the EU-28 in 2014



Source: Author's own compilation based on Eurostat (2016b) *Population change – Demographic balance and crude rates at national level (demo_gind)*, <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/database> (accessed 2016-06-30).

Taking into consideration the future demographic situation of the EU-28 in the light of Eurostat's long-term population projection based on the data from 2013, so-called EUROPOP2013 (see Eurostat, 2016a), the increasing immigration to the EU in recent years and the fact of being a net immigration area should be considered a positive signal. In the coming decades, the EU will be struggling with the challenges of ageing societies and an intensifying depopulation, however the projected demographic changes will not affect all member states evenly (Pachocka, 2015b). In that context, a particular importance of increasing immigration from third countries in the EU territory has been discussed for more than a decade not only within the EU (see EC, 2006, 2010, 2015b), but also by other international organizations such as the OECD (2006, 2014e, 2015a) and the UN (2015) in a broader context of entire Europe.

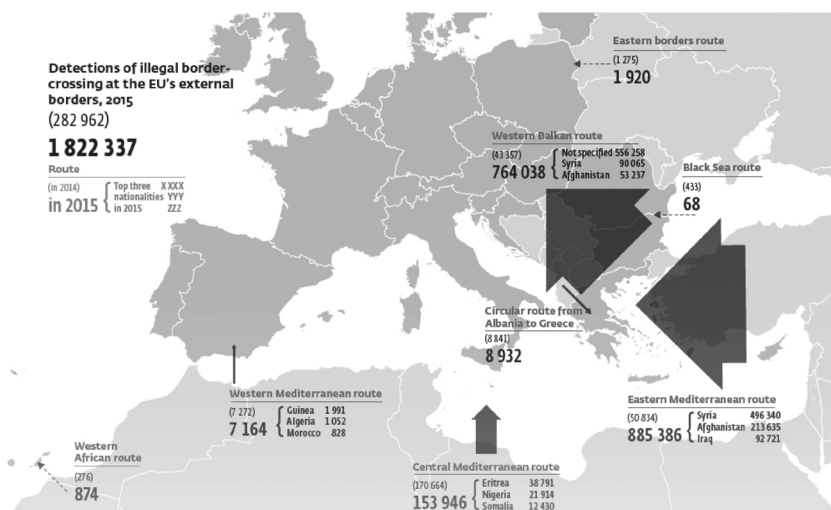
In 2014 alone, the total population change in the EU-28 amounted to 1.2 million people³ (1.8 million in 2013⁴). Two processes contributed to that, i.e. natural population increase of 191 thousand persons (81.8 thousand in 2013) and net migration (plus statistical adjustment) estimated at 987.4 thousand people (1.7 million in 2013). This means that international migration largely contributed to the positive population growth in the EU. Notably, the crude rate of total population change in the EU equalled to 2.3‰ in 2014 (3.5‰ in 2013), including the crude rate of net migration plus statistical adjustment of 1.9‰ (3.4‰ in 2013) (Eurostat, 2016b).

The analysis of the increase in the EU total population from the base year of the EUROPOP2013 shows that in comparison with the 507.2 million inhabitants of the EU-28 in 2013, the EU population will have increased by 3.1% by 2060 according to the main scenario of the projection. It will have decreased by 0.1% in the reduced migration variant with the component of international net migration reduced by 20%, or will have significantly decreased by 12.7% taking into account the no migration scenario. On this basis, one can conclude that absence of international migration will result in a substantial decline of the EU population (Pachocka, 2015c: 542-543). However, demographic developments projected for the EU in EUROPOP2013 require revision due to the extraordinary influx of people into the EU as a result of the 2014+ crisis, which has gone far beyond the projection's scenarios and will significantly change the contribution of immigration to the total population change of the EU and demographic indicators.

According to Frontex (2016: 14-16), there were more than 1.82 million detections of illegal border-crossing between border crossing points (BCPs) along the EU external borders in 2015, a 6-fold increase compared with 2014. Among eight main migratory routes to Europe three were of key importance due to the highest number of arrivals. i.e. the Eastern Mediterranean route, the Western Balkan route and the Central Mediterranean route (Figure 2). In addition, there were 701.6 thousand detections of persons staying illegally on the EU territory compared to 425 thousand in the previous year. Although the number of return decisions issued for third-country nationals was 286.7 thousand in 2015, the number of effective returns was much lower than the year before, amounting to 175.2 thousand.

Many cases of illegal entry to the EU were not detected and not recorded. Moreover, many migrants lost their life or went missing while attempting to reach Europe. According to the UNHCR (2016), there were 216.1 thousand arrivals by the Mediterranean Sea to Europe in 2014 and more than one million in 2015. Moreover, 3.5 thousand persons were dead or missing in 2014 and 3.8 thousand in 2015 in comparison to 600 in 2013.

Figure 2. Detections of illegal border-crossing at the EU's external borders in 2015 in the main migratory corridors



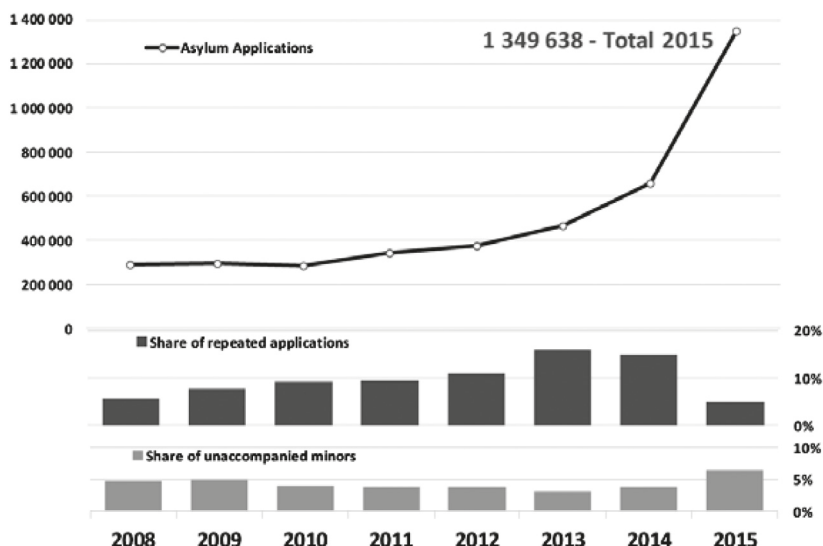
Source: Frontex (2016) *Annual Risk Analysis for 2016*. Warsaw: Frontex, p. 16, http://frontex.europa.eu/assets/Publications/Risk_Analysis/Annula_Risk_Analysis_2016.pdf (accessed 2016-06-30).

Among the increasing numbers of migrants arriving in Europe since 2014, the vast majority have been people in need of international protection, usually forced to leave their country of origin for a variety of reasons. Many of them have applied for asylum in European countries, especially in some EU member states and so-called associated countries that apply the Schengen regime rules⁵. The international protection procedures in the EU may result in different outcomes reported to Eurostat for statistical and analytical purposes (see EU, 2007), i.e. the asylum application (claim) may be rejected or approved; consequently the applicant may be granted a refugee status (under the Geneva Convention of 1951), a subsidiary protection status or a temporary protection status under the EU legislation and finally, an authorization to stay for humanitarian reasons under national law concerning international protection (EASO, 2015: 22-23).

In 2014, there were 662,680 third-country nationals applying for international protection in the EU+ countries, encompassing 28 EU members, Norway and Switzerland. The number in 2014 had been the highest recorded level and the sharpest year-to-year growth, +43% compared to 2013, since 2008 when the Joint Annual International Migration Data Collection was set up in the EU. Asylum applicants recorded were predominantly citizens of Syria, six Western Balkan countries considered together⁶ and Eritrea. Germany, Sweden, Italy, France and Hungary were the main countries accepting them. By the end of 2014, there had been over 500 thousand people awaiting a decision on their asylum application in the EU+, i.e. 37% more than the previous year. Also in 2014, around 390 thousand first instance decisions were issued, 10% more than in 2013. The overall recognition rate⁷ at EU+ level amounted to 47% including 99,440 persons given a refugee status, 59,565 persons with subsidiary protection and 22,315 persons with humanitarian protection. The highest recognition rates were noted for Syrians, Eritreans and stateless persons (EASO, 2015: 7).

2015 was another record year in terms of the number of applications for international protection in the EU+ countries (Figure 3)⁸. That year, 1.3 million applications were submitted, more than twice that of 2014 and once again it had been the largest number of applications since 2008. In 2015, the percentage of repeated applicants understood as the proportion of repeated applicants in the total number of applicants for international protection was decreasing, to drop to 5%

Figure 3. Number of applications for international protection in the EU+ 2008-2015



Source: EASO (2016) *Latest asylum trends – 2015 overview*, EASO, p. 1, <https://www.easo.europa.eu/sites/default/files/public/LatestAsylumTrends20151.pdf> (accessed 2016-06-30).

as the total for the whole year. Applications from Syrians constituted 27% of all applications, followed by citizens of six Western Balkan countries (mostly by citizens of Kosovo and Albania) (15%), Afghans (14%) and Iraqis (9%). Other nationalities among the top ten applicants in 2015 included Pakistanis, Eritreans, Nigerians, Iranians, Somalis and Russians. Germany was becoming increasingly popular (over 40% of the EU+ total), together with Hungary and Sweden, as the main destination countries amounting to 30% of all Syrian applicants (EASO, 2016).

2. The OECD's outlook at the migration and refugee crises in Europe

From its beginnings, the OECD was focused on different aspects of migration and related policies as some of the specific areas of its activities. Its agenda covered, among other issues, migration and development, international migration statistics and indicators, international migration trends and patterns, economic aspects of migration in

OECD countries, including labour migration, economic integration of migrants, education, skills and qualifications of migrants, impact of migrants on the economy of host countries as well as corresponding policies (OECD, 2016g).

In response to the outbreak and further deepening of the twin migration and refugee crises in Europe since 2014, the OECD has considerably increased its interest in this topic. Particular attention has been paid to the refugee context of the crisis, the consequences of the large-scale inflows of asylum seekers to its European members and the implications of accepting and integrating people in need of international protection in the host countries in Europe. It was reflected in OECD official positions on the occasion of different public interventions, in research and publications, through cooperation with other entities (e.g. the UNHCR and the EU) and the organization of events focusing on migration (e.g. OECD Week & Forum 2016). The analysis of the OECD's selected actions is presented below to outline and discuss the OECD's approach to the migration and refugee crises in Europe.

From May 2014 to December 2015, nine issues of the new *Migration Policy Debates* series were published offering a comprehensive overview of recent developments in migration and integration policies in OECD countries (see OECD, 2016h). Subsequent issues responded to various migration-related questions (Table 1) and aimed to reach well-informed conclusions some of which will be discussed in detail in this paper.

The in-depth content analysis of this series leads to the observation that only the three recent issues no. 7, 8 and 9 refer directly to the migrant and refugee crises 2014+ in Europe and their circumstances, consequences and ways of addressing them (see OECD, 2015e-g). However, important issues concerning migration, useful in the analysis of the current crisis situation in Europe, including the discussion on possible benefits of and solutions to the challenge of immigration, were covered in issues no. 2, 3 and 4 (see OECD, 2014b-d). Attention was directed to the fact that immigration could have positive impact on the economy, i.e. labour market, public finances, economic growth of the receiving states (OECD, 2014b). The benefits of the full use of the professional potential of immigrants and their children in the labour market in the host countries were emphasized. This, however, would require the implementation of more efficient policies in different ar-

Table 1. The problems discussed in *Migration Policy Debates* OECD series in 2014-2015 by issue

No. and release date	Title	Aim
No. 1, May 2014	Is migration really increasing?	To look at the magnitude and characteristics of the migration movements to Europe and the OECD and at how they have evolved over time
No. 2, May 2014	Is migration good for the economy?	To look at the evidence for how immigrants affect the economy in three main areas: the labour market, the public purse and economic growth
No. 3, December 2014	How can migrants' skills be put to use?	To look at policy approaches that can help migrants find jobs, especially the ones matching their skills
No. 4, December 2014	Who should be admitted as a labour migrant?	To look at the latest developments in policies for managing labour migration and at how they can evolve to meet the complexities of today's migration landscape
No. 5, August 2015	Is the United States still the land of opportunities for migrants?	To look at the strengths and weaknesses of the American integration model and discuss policy options to promote inclusiveness, social cohesion of immigrants and their children, and economic success for all in the United States
No. 6, September 2015 (the issue in French only)	Is school (still) one of the main routes of integration in France?	To look at the ability of the French school system to integrate the most disadvantaged students, including immigrant children or children with immigrant backgrounds
No. 7, September 2015	Is this humanitarian migration crisis different?	To look at the most recent developments in the humanitarian migration crisis and what makes this crisis different from previous ones
No. 8, November 2015	How will the refugee surge affect the European economy?	To assess the possible economic impact of the refugee crisis in Europe
No. 9, December 2015	Can we put an end to human smuggling?	To scrutinize the factors that facilitate human trafficking, as well as the smuggling routes to OECD countries, and to synthesize available evidence and review existing policy tools for tackling such a crime

Source: Author's compilation based on: OECD (2014a) 'Is migration really increasing?', *OECD Migration Policy Debates*, No. 1; OECD (2014b) 'Is migration good for the economy?', *OECD Migration Policy Debates*, No. 2; OECD (2014c) 'How can migrants' skills be put to use?', *OECD Migration Policy Debates*, No. 3; OECD (2014d) 'Who should be admitted as a labour migrant?', *OECD Migration Policy Debates*, No. 4; OECD (2015c) 'Is the United States still the land of opportunities for migrants?', *OECD Migration Policy Debates*, No. 5; OECD (2015d), 'L'école est-elle (encore) un des principaux vecteurs d'intégration en France?', *OECD Migration Policy Debates*, No. 6; OECD (2015e) 'Is this humanitarian migration crisis different?', *OECD Migration Policy Debates*, No. 7; OECD (2015f) 'How will the refugee surge affect the European economy?', *OECD Migration Policy Debates*, No. 8; OECD (2015g) 'Can we put an end to human smuggling?', *OECD Migration Policy Debates*, No. 9.

eas, including education and social integration (OECD, 2014c). Apart from that, labour migration management and related policies in the receiving states would be beneficial for other categories of migrants (OECD, 2014d). Moreover, it was noted that “migration movements can be affected by economic, environmental, geopolitical, security and public health crises” that “can greatly complicate the task of managing migration in an orderly and safe manner” (OECD, 2014d). It is true not only for labour migration, but also for its other kinds, including the humanitarian one observed under the 2014+ refugee crisis in Europe.

In the context of the scope of this article, issues no. 7 and 8 are the most relevant, and therefore will be given the most attention (see OECD, 2015e, f). Issue no. 7 comprehensively describes the crisis landscape in Europe. It is an in-depth analysis of the recent developments in the field of migration and asylum in Europe. As such, it aims to provide clear and evidence-based explanation of the specificity and distinctiveness of the 2014+ crisis compared with the previous crises of similar nature in Europe. Especially, it seeks to delineate the current migration crisis from the refugee (humanitarian) crisis of the early 1990s, which was the result of wars and conflicts in former Yugoslavia. Referring to the UNHCR, Eurostat, Frontex, and its own data and works, the OECD highlights the unprecedented scale of flows to Europe today, the main migratory routes in the Mediterranean region, major sending, transit and receiving countries, key motives for migration (humanitarian causes but also poor economic conditions) and basic characteristics of migrants (origins of so called ‘refugees’ are very heterogeneous with the prevalence of Syrians followed by Kosovars, Eritreans and Iraqis). Moreover, terminological dilemmas concerning certain words such as an ‘asylum seeker’, ‘refugee’ and ‘migrant’ are discussed and some limitations of the common asylum policy in the EU are mentioned. Also the policy challenges arising in migrant-receiving states in Europe are identified. These challenges include increasing economic disparities among countries, changing demographic conditions, and diversified attitudes towards migrants across European societies (see OECD, 2015e).

In the OECD brief discussed here (see OECD, 2015e), the current crisis in Europe is interchangeably referred to as a ‘humanitarian migration crisis’ and ‘refugee crisis’. From the OECD perspective, the crisis should not be called a ‘migration crisis’ because instruments al-

lowing to legally move to another country, such as visas and permits, already exist. Therefore, a more adequate name is a 'refugee' or 'asylum crisis' since the challenges lie with the lacking procedures of the asylum system in Europe. However, due to the fact that people arriving in Europe have different motivations and legal status, it is impossible to categorize them easily. Hence, the term 'migrant' seems to be the one most fitting to describe the ongoing crisis and the people on the move as it is rather broad and encompasses all the different cases. Although large-scale migratory waves have been observed in Europe since the end of World War II, it would be a simplification to draw a parallel among them. Those migratory movements were not only post-war or post-colonial transfers, but also reflected ethnic, economic and humanitarian circumstances. They were also specific to the times with less personal mobility, higher travel costs and impeded cross-country travel. As past experiences show, European states were successful in dealing with the situation and largely integrated those migrants who remained there. Moreover, in a lot of cases, the receiving countries saw significant economic benefits to the inflow of migrants, if not immediately, then at least some time later (see OECD, 2015e).

While issue no. 7 (OECD, 2015e) largely deals with the broad and multidimensional context of migration, issue no. 8 (OECD, 2015f) focuses mainly on its economic aspects and the viability of making projections. It attempts to portray the impact of the large-scale influx of migrants, usually considered as refugees, on the European economy. However, the analysis of the economic impact of the refugee crisis on host countries in Europe encounters some limitations. First, most research carried out focuses on the influence of total immigration – whereas the fraction of migrants considered as refugees (or asylum seekers) is usually rather small. Second, people migrating in need of international protection are very mobile and it happens that they apply for asylum in more than one country (if at all), which causes difficulties when estimating their numbers per country. These facts inhibit the possibility to gather comprehensive and precise statistics. Moreover, the expected duration of asylum applicants' stay is uncertain and varies for particular individuals. The reason for this is that some of them will be granted one of the forms of international protection, such as a refugee status or subsidiary protection status in the receiving states, while some of them will be denied that status. Finally, other limiting

factors are the duration of the asylum procedure and the time necessary to enter the labour market, which differ depending on the country (see OECD, 2015f).

The OECD notes two possible vehicles of gaining influence on the influx of refugees on the European economy, i.e. through public finances (see more OECD, 2013) and via the labour market. The first mechanism encompasses, among other issues, increasing public spending on asylum processes and the reception of refugees in receiving countries as well as financial aid directed to countries of origin and transit, e.g. to Syrian nationals under the temporary protection status in Turkey. This might stimulate an aggregated demand in the EU economy in the short run. Moreover, public expenditure invested in migrants' integration into the labour market may have a positive pay-off, once they find jobs and start contributing to the economy and respective welfare system. In this context, the OECD makes a reference to "past evidence on the fiscal impact of refugees" from Australia, Canada and Sweden. These cases indicate that while the financial cost of accepting refugees may be high at first, it will start decreasing quickly once they begin entering the workforce (see OECD, 2015f).

In turn, the influence of refugees on the labour market, if they requested asylum, depends on the factors such as the duration of the asylum procedure, the type of status granted when a positive decision is made on the asylum claim, conditions of access to the labour market under the asylum process and after its successful completion, and whether they will or are to enter the workforce (see OECD, 2015f).

Consequently, the OECD presents the results of the estimations concerning the cumulative impact of asylum seekers accepted between January 2014 and June 2016 on the workforce of the European Economic Area (EEA) plus Switzerland. According to one scenario of the estimation – called a low one – there would be 1.2 million registered asylum seekers with children in 2015 and this number would amount to 610 thousand for the first six months of 2016. For another scenario, considered to be a high one, the number of asylum claims would equal to 1.4 million for the EEA with Switzerland in 2015 and 1.1 million for the first half of 2016. The final – rather illustrative – estimations reveal that cumulative impact of refugees accepted between January 2014 and June 2016 could result in approximately 380 thousand new entries to the EU labour market by January 2016 and 680 thousand by

December 2016 under the low scenario, which then would represent 0.3% of the EEA labour force. For the high scenario, this cumulative impact by the end of 2016 would correspond to no more than 0.4% for the EEA work force and less than 1 million additional entries on the labour market. The above-mentioned estimations are obviously uncertain as the influx of asylum seekers to Europe is constantly evolving with a tendency to increase and this is still true for the beginning of 2016, however it may change within a year owing to the EU-Turkey agreement of 18 March 2016 called '1:1 mechanism', in force since April 2016. Also, one has to remember that some of the asylum applicants that were refused international protection in Europe and obliged to return to their countries of origin, decided to stay and may start working on the informal labour market there. The general conclusion is that despite the obvious short-term costs related to increasing migration inflows, considerable economic and public-finance benefits will be observed if only integration of the refugees into the labour market is successful (see OECD, 2015f).

Apart from the aforementioned new and up-to-date series of *Migration Policy Debates* inaugurated in 2014, the OECD continued to publish materials on migration-related issues in the period from the beginning of 2014 until June 2016. Specifically, it increased the volume of work devoted to the refugee crisis in Europe and the situation of the large number of newcomers in need of protection in OECD member states. That approach was visible in the *International Migration Outlook 2015* (OECD, 2015b), which presented an overview of recent developments in international migration flows and migration policies in OECD countries together with labour market trends and integration policies towards immigrants. Even though this report used mostly data up to 2013/2014, it formulates important conclusions. That is, it states that the ongoing humanitarian migration crisis represents an emergency and therefore calls for a coordinated response both at European and global levels in times of rather poor economic and labour market conditions in Europe and a global struggle against terrorism. So far, most resources, including funds, administrative staff and attention of policy makers, have been pooled into addressing the humanitarian side of the crisis. However, it is crucial to adjust the legal migration systems to align them to the constantly shifting economic and demographic circumstances; it is equally important to draw les-

sons from the evaluation of the effectiveness of policies implemented in the past (OECD, 2015b: 9-10).

Moreover, the joint publication of the OECD and the European Commission titled *Indicators of Immigrant Integration 2015 – Settling In* (2015) is worth mentioning. It provides the first truly international comparison of the outcomes of integration of immigrants and their children in all EU and OECD countries. The study is based on more than 20 indicators from five broad areas, i.e. employment, education and skills, social inclusion, civic engagement and social cohesion. Also, in February 2016, the OECD analysis titled *Financial Education and the Long-term Integration of Refugees and Migrants* was published. In line with its findings, the key determinants of success in integrating refugees are their ability to understand and adapt to the host countries' economic and financial systems, together with the proper use of the support stemming from the existing welfare provisions. Finally, the OECD library also offers a wide choice of thematic working and policy papers, usually of collective authorship, dealing with migration-related issues under the framework of *OECD Social, Employment and Migration Working Papers* (OECD, 2016j) which is a series of selected research and studies on migration, labour market and social policy prepared within the OECD.

However, so far the most valuable OECD contribution to the debate on the 2014+ refugee crisis in Europe is the book *Making Integration Work: Refugees and Others in Need of Protection* (OECD, 2016a), which opens a new series of OECD publications on integration policies. There are ten main policy lessons in the area of integration of refugees and others in need of international protection that can be drawn from the OECD countries' experiences and best practices (Table 2). Their relevance for the design and implementation of effective national integration policies increases today as Europe experiences the humanitarian migration crisis of an unprecedented scale. It is evident that many of the asylum seekers that arrive to Europe's shores will settle and stay in the receiving states. In this view, it is imperative to implement effective and highly customized integration systems for these specific migrants.

Table 2. Ten main OECD policy lessons in integration of refugees and other people in need of international protection

Lesson no.	Contents
1	Provide activation and integration services as soon as possible for humanitarian migrants* and asylum seekers** with high prospects of being allowed to stay
2	Facilitate labour market access for asylum seekers with high prospects of being allowed to stay
3	Factor employment prospects into dispersal policies
4	Record and assess humanitarian migrants' foreign qualifications, work experience and skills
5	Take into account the growing diversity of humanitarian migrants and develop tailor-made approaches
6	Identify mental and physical health issues early and provide adequate support
7	Develop support programmes specific to unaccompanied minors who arrive past the age of compulsory schooling
8	Build on civil society to integrate humanitarian migrants
9	Promote humanitarian migrants' equal access to integration services across the country
10	Acknowledge that the integration of very poorly educated humanitarian migrants requires long-term training and support
* Humanitarian migrants are people granted any type of international protection on the basis of their application for asylum and migrants resettled through humanitarian programmes with the assistance of the UN-HCR or through private sponsorship.	
** Asylum seekers are people who have formally applied for asylum, but whose claim is pending.	

Source: OECD (2016a) *Making Integration Work: Refugees and others in need of protection*. Paris: OECD Publishing.

Among the ten lessons devised by the OECD, some lessons deserve particular attention. Specifically, lesson no. 2 suggests that not only humanitarian migrants should be offered full labour market access in host countries, but it is also of key importance to facilitate labour market access for asylum seekers with high prospects of being allowed to stay, as the sooner they become active workers the better they can integrate into society. If barriers to labour market entry exist in their host country, they may start to work illegally, gaps in their employment history may appear and they may lose valuable skills. In most of the OECD countries, the asylum seekers are granted some form of access to the labour market after a waiting period from 1 month to 1 year (see OECD, 2016a: 18-21).

Also, it stems from lesson no. 5 that the access to the labour market for asylum seekers granted with one of the forms of international protection, for the so called humanitarian migrants, does not nec-

essarily mean successful economic integration. Therefore, employment-related support in host countries is common. Usually, it covers job-related and language training. Most of the OECD member states provide services to humanitarian migrants in these areas, but the extent of the assistance offered varies (OECD, 2016a: 35-40).

On 28 January 2016, a High-level Conference on the Integration of Beneficiaries of International Protection was organized jointly by the OECD and the UNHCR in Paris. On this occasion, both entities pointed to the fact that there is a strong economic incentive to assist the refugees living within the OECD countries, so that they can enter the job market and continue contributing to it in the future. The conference coincided with the release of the above-mentioned OECD report *Making Integration Work* (2016) during the press event hosted by the Heads of the OECD and the UNHCR, Angel Gurría and Filippo Grandi respectively (UNHCR and OECD, 2016).

As a result of the event, the summary and conclusions from the conference were prepared and made available. They state that legal, economic and social integration of refugees is crucial – as it is necessary before they can have a positive impact on the economy. It also enables them to function in a “welcoming environment” where they are seen as valuable additions to societies and where they are encouraged to stay. Therefore, the approaches and the support that enables this kind of integration need to be recognized, while countries must be aware that the initial high cost of such an investment will eventually turn into “positive fiscal impact” – and will become a value for the future. “Early investments in supporting integration, including during the asylum process for those with high prospects to remain, will produce dividends in the mid- to long-term, reflecting that refugees are important contributors to the economic, social and cultural life of their new countries” (OECD and UNHCR, 2016: 4-7).

The approach discussed above was reiterated by Angel Gurría on the occasion of a high-level seminar on the refugee crisis organized jointly by the Council of Europe Development Bank (CEDB) and the OECD and held in Paris on 17 May 2016. In his opening speech, Gurría outlined the flawed argumentation by critics of high migration flows who often cite the upfront costs that the receiving countries endure, while ignoring gains that they experience at a later stage. According to OECD estimates, public spending on admission related procedures

and integration can increase aggregate demand in the economy of Europe by 0.1-0.2% of GDP. Effective integration policies will provide long-term social and economic pay-offs such as taxes paid by refugees, their contributions to social security system, and stimulation of innovation and economic growth (Gurría, 2016).

In addition, at the turn of May and June 2016, the OECD Week was held in Paris, including the OECD Forum (31 May – 1 June) and a meeting of the OECD Council at Ministerial Level (1-2 June). This edition was focused on strengthening productivity and promoting inclusive and sustainable growth. One of the topics discussed under the section *Productivity & inclusive growth* during the OECD Forum was integration of migrants in connection with the challenges resulting from increasing migration inflows with a particular attention paid to the economic, social and political influence of the sudden, large influx of immigrants and refugees into Europe (see OECD, 2016k).

3. If not the OECD's approach to the migration and refugee crises, then what alternatives exist?

The OECD approach to the ongoing migrant and refugee crises stands out among the attitudes represented by other international actors involved in this debate, such as the UNHCR, the IOM or the EU. These entities differ in their origins and circumstances of their foundation, past experience and know-how, geographic coverage and members, objectives, instruments and actions. As a result, they often come up with different perspectives to the same problem.

Established in 1950, the UNHCR's main goal was to help European refugees during the aftermath of World War II. Since then it has become responsible for protecting and supporting refugees around the world, at the same time ensuring that the Geneva Convention of 1951 relating to the Status of Refugees is honoured by all signatory governments. The UNHCR is one of the entities which form the UN system (UN, 2015). It is the most global organization with a humanitarian profile and aimed at providing international aid. Having a truly universal character and worldwide coverage, it looks at the refugee crisis in Europe as one of many similar crises and emergencies around the world. What is more, the UNHCR is focused on the situation of people in need of international protection, commonly called refugees

and asylum seekers, and not on the individual interests of the countries involved. Of course, the UNHCR monitors the crisis in the Mediterranean, and provides statistics and reports which are a valuable source of up-to-date information on the developments.

The most important inter-governmental organization in the field of migration is the IOM created in 1951, which brings together 165 member states and 8 observers (IOM, 2015b). The IOM's work is divided into four main pillars which fulfil its purposes and carry out its functions defined in the IOM Constitution (1953). They cover: migration and development, facilitating migration, regulating migration and forced migration. In 1992, the organization was granted an observer status in the UN General Assembly. In addition, both the IOM and the UN secretariats have been maintaining close relations since 1996 when the Cooperation Agreement was signed (2016c). Like the UNHCR, the IOM is an international global organization; hence it views the crisis in Europe as one of many important events which have to be dealt with. Recently, it has regularly been publishing its *Europe/Mediterranean Migration Response: Situation Reports* (see e.g. IOM, 2016a), which present the migration and refugee situation overview in the region and the IOM's response including specific activities undertaken. Some aspects of the crisis are also covered by its *The Middle East and North Africa Annual Reports* (see e.g. IOM, 2015). One more key IOM document in this field is the study on *Migration Trends across the Mediterranean: Connecting the Dots* developed by Altai Consulting (2015) for the IOM's Regional Office for the Middle East and North Africa.

Keeping in mind the scope of interest of the UNHCR and the IOM, it is equally valuable to delve into the profiles of the EU and the OECD – both international organizations strongly linked to Europe historically and geographically. The EU is more formalized and institutionalized than the OECD, and its members have closer mutual ties than in the case of the OECD. It has a legal personality (EU, 2012a: art. 47) and its member states confer to the EU some of their competences to attain their common objectives (EU 2012a: art. 1). The EU has a broad spectrum of tools to influence its members. These tools are anchored in the Treaty on the European Union (EU, 2012a) and the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (EU, 2012b). Moreover, the Union operates through an extensive institutional framework, encompassing the European Parliament, the European Council, the Council, the

European Commission, the Court of Justice of the EU, the European Central Bank and the Court of Auditors, in order to realize its aims and implement its policies and actions (EU, 2012a: art 13(1)).

The EU gathers European countries exclusively, and only those that have met the criteria of membership. With regard to migration, the EU strives to develop a truly comprehensive and consistent migration and asylum policy at the EU level, based on a shared competence between the EU institutions and the EU members, through gradual harmonization of national policies. The Common European Asylum System (CEAS) is an important component of this policy. The EU approach to the twin migration and refugee crises is focused on a broadly defined scope of the problem, as reflected in the *European Agenda on Migration* (EAM) announced in May 2015 by the European Commission (2015a). The Agenda proposed a number of short-, medium- and long-term solutions, including legal instruments. So far, the progress in the implementation of the Agenda has been insufficient and the effectiveness of a common migration and asylum policy has proven to be limited. In addition, some proposed solutions have met with a strong opposition from certain EU member states. A very clear example of the lacking solidarity at the EU level has been the Visegrad Group states' negative response to the relocation and resettlement schemes devoted to people in need of international protection.

Also the OECD is a strongly Europe-oriented international organization as its roots date back to the late 1940s when the Organization for European Economic Cooperation (OEEC) was established to administer the Marshall Plan in European countries after World War II. It was transformed into the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development only in 1960 when the US and Canada joined its structures (OECD, 2016e). Despite the fact that today the OECD is an international global organization, out of its 35 members, 25 are European countries, including 22 EU member states (OECD, 2016f).

Compared with the EU, the OECD is more analytical and advisory in nature, and much less formalized and institutionalized. In accordance with the Convention on the OECD of 1960, the legal personality possessed by the OEEC was retained by the OECD (1960a: art. 15) as well as its legal capacity, as provided in the Supplementary Protocol No. 2 to this document (OECD, 1960b). Among the Organization's legal instruments, only the decisions and international agreements

concluded in the framework of the OECD are legally binding. This is not the case with other tools, i.e. recommendations, declarations, arrangements and understandings. Although the OECD instruments vary in their legal power and in consequence seem to be softer than the EU ones, they outline numerous international norms and standards, and form a useful overview of best practices and proposals of policy guidelines in many areas (OECD, 2016i). The OECD aims at promoting policies that contribute to socio-economic development, growth and stability and increasing standard of living both in its member states and in the world. Its work is devoted to data collection and their analysis in different fields, followed by policy discussions, formulation of recommendations and publication of the results (OECD, 2016l). Between January 2014 and June 2016 there was no OECD legal instrument adopted dealing directly with refugee or migration issues (OECD, 2016d), so it seems that in this area the OECD relies on its advisory role and standard-setting powers.

The EU is a strongly institutionalized organization with a highly regional profile. The OECD, in turn, is an international organization originating from Europe, which over time acquired a global character, even if it remains selective in terms of membership. Its key focus is on issues of socio-economic development and the policies in this area. Also the mechanisms of influence of the EU and the OECD are different. The impact of the EU is more formalized through legal instruments and policies, some of which fall within the exclusive competence of the EU and others are based on a shared competence with the members. The refugee crisis has shown that some EU countries, e.g. the Visegrad Group states, oppose the top-down EU solutions in the area of migration and asylum, even if the EU proposals appear to be a valid general framework (e.g. EAM). As a result, the principle of solidarity in the EU has been put under pressure and national-level solutions to the challenge of migration have been sought after. In contrast to the EU, the OECD is largely advisory in nature. Therefore, it plays the role of a recommending voice rather than of an ordering one. The result is that the OECD members may be more prone to voluntarily implement its recommendations regarding the ways of addressing the migration challenge, particularly when they are made aware of the possible future socio-economic gains.

The main objective of the OECD is not to propose comprehensive legal and institutional solutions. The OECD draws conclusions from the experience of its members, supplemented by in-depth economic analyses and other studies. It identifies problems and challenges, and proposes the direction of solutions, showing their positives and boundary conditions of implementation (see also Szent-Iványi, 2016). Both the EU and the OECD are member-oriented, taking into account their interests. It is much easier for these organizations as they have a limited number of members, all highly developed countries. The difference is that the EU gathers 28 states exclusively from Europe, while the OECD, although historically it was supposed to be Europe-oriented (the OEEC after the World War II), gathers 35 states from around the world and hence displays a more global mindset than the EU does.

The EU focuses on its member states and their interests. Therefore, it seeks to tackle the crisis in the most beneficial way for the EU states and societies and not necessarily for the asylum seekers and refugees. Even if the OECD also views the migration crisis through the prism of its members' interests, it is evident that the role of the refugees as future contributing members of society is also recognized. In other words, the OECD narrative highlights that today's refugees may have a positive impact on the host countries' economic development in the future. This is not a humanitarian approach by itself, but a pragmatic take on the challenges that Europe faces. When developing and presenting this particular stance to the migration crisis, the OECD draws on past experience, know-how and best practices of the OECD members as well as on the vast array of data and research conducted over time under its aegis.

Conclusions

Scarpetta and Dumont (2016) state that Europe is capable of successfully dealing with the refugee crisis with correct policies, focus and enforcement of established rules – if it can integrate all the arrivals and stop the illegal activities at its borders. If this is done optimally, and the well-targeted refugee support and integration efforts match the scale of inflows, then the circumstances may bring fiscal benefit in the long run. Also Legrain (2016: 36-37) stresses that “welcoming

refugees is not only a humanitarian and legal obligation, it is an investment that can yield substantial economic dividends” as

refugees can contribute economically to the societies that welcome them in many ways: as workers, innovators, entrepreneurs, taxpayers, consumers and investors. Their efforts can help create jobs, raise the productivity and wages of local workers, lift capital returns, stimulate international trade and investment, and boost innovation, enterprise and growth (Legrain, 2016: 36-37).

The OECD represents a very similar approach to the refugee crisis, i.e. a very pragmatic, strongly policy-focused and result-oriented take. This is what distinguishes the OECD approach to the challenges of migration. Clearly, each of the international actors discussed in this paper, including the UNHCR, the IOM, the EU, or the OECD, is bound to view the crisis through a unique lens. These organizations differ from each other in their general profile, circumstances of their establishment, their missions and objectives, powers, tools and the scope of their activities. As a result, each of them has at its disposal a different set of mechanisms of influence and their effectiveness varies. However, the approaches that these international actors have taken towards the migration crisis are complementary and often lead to synergies. That is why the close cooperation of the countries affected by the crisis with various international stakeholders is so important. The IOM and the UNHCR provide support for migrants and refugees, the EU seeks a comprehensive response in the framework of a common migration and asylum policy, while the OECD suggests how to make the best use of the demographic and economic potential of new arrivals for the mutual benefit of refugees and host countries. In this view, while the EU seeks to introduce top-down solutions, often mandatory, the OECD gives recommendations. The OECD employs good examples from the past and employs pragmatic arguments supported by analysis and research; it also stresses the importance of swift and effective integration of the newcomers into society.

International migration is one of several key topics that have been covered by the OECD for many years. Today, it gains in importance. The OECD deals with migration in the context of socio-economic development as well as migration policies in its member states. The key observations from the examination of the OECD approach to the

ongoing migration and refugee crises are as follows: migrants arriving in Europe in large numbers in recent years, most of whom are in need of international protection, create an opportunity for improvements in the areas of demographics and economic development in Europe. However, in order to make adequate use of their potential for their own and their host countries' benefit, it is necessary that the European immigration and integration policies be revised and adapted to new political/legal conditions and economic circumstances. These include, but are not limited to, age structure, education level, health and future plans of the incoming population. From this perspective, refugees can be considered as valuable demographic and socio-economic assets. Thus the OECD, supported by the UNHCR, proposes a pragmatic and positive approach, strongly policy-focused, aiming at a successful integration of new migrants into society and the job market, and socio-economic development of European states. This approach contrasts with frequently debated approaches that limit the challenge of migration to moral and legal duties of the host countries.

Obviously, the influx of immigrants in the territory of a given state is just the beginning of a longer and more complex story. The list of questions is rather extensive, especially concerning the migrants themselves and their characteristics as well as the conditions of welcoming and integration of the incoming population by the receiving states. What has to be considered is the motives for migration (migration driven by educational, economic, political, humanitarian, environmental or family-related reasons) and migrants' plans for the future (e.g. to stay temporarily or permanently; apply for international protection; acquire citizenship, enter the workforce), migrants' legal status ((ir)regular, (un)documented) and their basic features (e.g. age, health, level of education, language skills, qualifications, professional experience).

The OECD can play a very important role in times of migrant and refugee crises in Europe, taking into account its aims and actions mentioned in the Convention of 1960, and referring to its more than half-century international experience as an actor and an advisory body in the world economy. The Organization adopted a proactive attitude towards the crisis already in 2014. Since then its activity in this field has encompassed, i.a. public interventions, research and publications, cooperation with other entities (e.g. the UNHCR, the EU) and the or-

ganization of events strongly focused on migration (e.g. the OECD Week 2016).

The recent large-scale migration to Europe has great potential to contribute to Europe's development, especially in demographic, economic and political terms. Migration can stimulate both population and economic growth as well as contribute to the revision of migration policies in European countries in order to better adapt their scope, aims and tools to the reality of intensifying international migratory movements, for now consisting mainly of asylum seekers. Instead of looking at refugees as a threat and being concerned about the costs associated with their influx and stay, it is important to take into account the advantages of their presence for Europe's demographics, economy and policies' design and implementation. Many of today's newcomers are here to stay. Therefore, they will continue to influence the social and economic circumstances of Europe in years and decades to come.

The OECD's approach outlining the importance of successful integration of refugees for their positive economic impact on the receiving countries finds support in scientific articles, think-tank conclusions and economic analyses (see e.g. Legrain, 2016b; Zetter, 2012). However, further research in this field is needed, followed by its broad popularization through evidence-based publications and public debate, if the positive ways of addressing the migration-related challenges are brought to the surface of the debate and a more constructive discussion at the level of governments can be stimulated.

ENDNOTES

- 1 A 'reporting state' refers to an EU member state that provides Eurostat with national data concerning the respective area (e.g. international migration) in a certain period of time.
- 2 "Third countries" denotes countries outside the EU.
- 3 For 2014 estimated data for Portugal, Romania, the UK; provisional data for Ireland; provisional and break in time series data for France.
- 4 Estimated (Romania) and provisional (Ireland) data for 2013.
- 5 These are: Switzerland, Norway, Lichtenstein and Iceland.
- 6 This group includes Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Kosovo, Montenegro and Serbia.
- 7 Recognition rate is understood as the number of positive decisions on applications for international protection as a proportion of the total number of decisions.
- 8 This number is based on monthly data of the Early Warning and Preparedness System (EPS) provided by 30 EU+ states for January-August, 29 for September, 28 for October-November and by 27 countries for December 2015. It is passed to EASO by the Group for the Provision of Statistics of the European Union Member States plus Norway and Switzerland (EU+) and therefore is a non-validated estimate of the overall trend. As such, it may differ from the future Eurostat data.

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