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The Immigration Crisis in Europe and the Impacts on the Covid-19 Global Control

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Abstract

Europe is facing the most serious migrant crisis since World War II with the majority of migrants from Syria and other African countries. It is worth mentioning that this challenge has increased dramatically and complicatedly, affecting many fields, not only in terms of socio-economy, but also shaking the "humanistic" values inherent in the Old Continent. In addition to the complicated and severe impacts of the global Covid-19 pandemic, the migration crisis in Europe, to make a bad situation worse, poses major challenges for pandemic control. In this article, the author presents the state of the migration crisis in Europe and the implications for controlling the global Covid-19 pandemic.

Keywords: Migration, Crisis, Control, Covid-19.

I. Introduction

The studies refer to the situation, implications and solutions on immigration issues in the European Union in the current period: The article "Illegal Immigration and Fight against Illegal Migration in Member States of the European Union", by Kamilla Sheryazdanova - describes the development of European Union regulations on immigration and asylum, while also addressing certain legal immigration policy issues. Its conclusions are based on discussions of processes and legal provisions concerning the future of Europe.

Authors Tamara Jonjić and Georgia Mavro in their report on: "Immigration in the EU: policies and politics in times of crisis 2007-2012" analyze migration patterns such as: family reunification, student migration, residents and long-term integration, and migration. The link between immigration policy, employment and economy is showed. Thereby, the author also present the issues of immigration policy.

Regarding the response to EU migration policy, the article "Queen's Papers on Europeanization, No 4/2003, Still Beyond Fortress Europe? Patterns and Pathways in EU Migration Policy" by Andrew Geddes points out the EU migration policy response: the extent and how the new European venues now contribute to the formation of policies, immigration and politics of Europe.

Border control issues: author Urszula Lisson in "Border Management and Human Rights" - This study contributes to elucidating obligations for border management and maritime law. This includes handling general human rights obligations that also apply to border control at land borders and airports. In addition, the study examines special questions about human rights and maritime law that arise with respect to the protection of maritime boundaries. It also focuses on human rights

obligations regarding migration control measures. Regarding the integration of migrants at their destination and conflicts due to immigration, "Illegal Immigration and Fight against Illegal Migration in Member States of the European Union" by Kamilla SHERYAZDANOVA describes the development of regulations of the European Union on immigration and asylum, while also addressing certain immigration policy issues on the law. Its conclusions are based on discussions of processes and legal provisions concerning the possible future of Europe. Dancygier (2010) in "Immigration and Conflict in Europe" presents a theory that explains why we see conflicts between immigrants and indigenous peoples in some places while not in others, and why some cities witness conflicts between immigrants and government actors while other cities do not. This book looks at how economic conditions interact with electoral dynamics to explain the conflict between immigrants and indigenous peoples, immigrants and the state through groups and cities in England, Germany and France. The author emphasizes the importance of national immigration institutions and local political economies in shaping the economic position and political views of immigrants, while clarifying economic attractiveness and election. However, it is not the cultural difference that determines the characteristics of conflict and peace.

Regarding the issue of illegal immigration to the EU, in the article "Irregular Immigration in the European Union", the authors Pia M. Orrenius and Madeline Zavodny mention the situation of illegal migration which is increasing again in the EU. Although it is predicted that it is difficult to flee, the close proximity between the nations in chaos and the promise of a better life led hundreds of thousands of irregular immigrants into the EU in 2014-2015. This policy brief examines abnormal immigration into the EU and draws lessons from the United States. It focuses on the economic aspect of illegal immigration. There are economic benefits for receiving countries as well as for illegal migrants, but those benefits require that migrants have access to the labor market, and that prices and wages are very highly flexible. Meanwhile, reducing financial costs requires restricting access to public assistance programs for newcomers. Successful settlement of irregular migration may require significant coordination and cost sharing among EU member states.

However, referring to the impact of the migration crisis on the global Covid-19 pandemic, there is still no scientific work to mention, because this is a topical issue and it is completely new. in the areas of research.

II. Research Methodology

The paper uses two research methods: descriptive statistical research method and analytical-synthesis method to assess the current situation of migration crisis in Europe and the impacts on the global Covid-19 pandemic. In the article, the author uses some secondary data of research works to assess the current situation of immigration issues in Europe in recent years.

III. Research results

1. The situation of immigration in Europe today

Immigration issues are not new problems arising in Europe; in fact, the substantial increase of immigration on this continent began after World War II. In the period 1950-1990, the total number of foreigners in the EU increased four times from 3.8 million (1.7% of the population) in 1950 to 10.9 million (3.3% of the population) in 1970 and 15 million (4.5% of the population) in 1990 [3]. The number of immigrants during this period increased the most in the UK and France which are two Empires with vast territories. At the end of the war, the two countries received considerable number of immigrants and asylum seekers from the former colonies.

Entering the twenty-first century, immigration into the EU situation is still increasing without any sign of decrease. From 2001 to 2007, an average of 2 million people immigrated to the EU every year. According to the Center for European Reform, until 2006, the number of immigrants into the EU was about 18.5 million, accounting for 3.8% of the total EU population, mostly from Turkey, Morocco, Albania, and Algeria. The number of immigrants increased since nations issued thousands of immigrant licenses each year for the purpose of family reunification (almost 80% of

the 58,700 people who were accepted for immigration in England in 2007 were women and children) and the purpose of serving the highly skilled labors [1].

From 2008 to 2009, the EU welcomed thousands of immigrants from the Africa. According to data from the the Statistical Office of the European Union (Eurostat), in 2008 alone, the EU welcomed about 3.8 million immigrants, mostly from North African countries. In 2009, this figure reduced but still at fairly high figure of about 3 million immigrants in the Member States of the EU. From 2010 to the present, EU population has overpassed the 500 million people level. Particularly in 2011, Eurostat revealed that the EU population increased by 1.4 million people (from 499.7 million to 501.1 million) and 63% of this population growth (corresponding to 900.000 people) was due to migration and immigration, the rest was from birth [6].

EU crisis figures in 2015 and 2016:

The crisis on migrants in Europe is increasing sharply, according to the the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex), with about 340.000 migrants from Syria, Iran, Afghanistan and Africa to Europe in 2015, in which the number of July 2015 was 137.000. The number of illegal immigrants entering the EU in the first 10 months of 2015 was 1.2 million - a record number in EU history [2]. Greece and Italy are the countries with the highest number of migrants, and they are considered the "gateway" of Europe. In Greece, there are 473.000 migrants, almost ten times increase compared to 2014. The "leader" of EU, Germany, has received 500.000 refugees. UNHCR announced record numbers: from August 8-14, 2015, nearly 21.000 immigrants entered Greece, nearly half the number of people crossing the Atlantic into the country in 2014. Italy and Hungary shared the same fate when at the same time, they had to receive up to 20.000 and 34.000 immigrants each. More than 17,000 migrants arrived in Croatia from September 16 to September 20, 2015, at the time when Hungary blocked the border with Serbia, the country also considered a transit place for migrants to go to Western countries [8]. On September 18, 2015, Hungary blocked a train carrying migrants from Croatia into the country after more than 4,000 people crossed the border area between the two countries. The context of a series of Balkan countries announcing the closure of the border also means the blockade of the routes of migrants seeking to enter Western Europe. The border areas of Croatia - Hungary and Slovenia are becoming new hot spots in the crisis of immigrants. According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), early October 2015, 541.297 people migrated to Europe and 2.887 died in the Mediterranean Sea. More than 31.000 people have immigrated to Europe by sea through the Mediterranean since the beginning of 2016, with the majority of people coming from Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq. According to the IOM, the number of people flocking to Europe in January 2016 was sharply 21 times compared to that in 2015. In May 2016, there were about 189,414 refugees and immigrants to Europe. The number of deaths on the road was 1357, lower than the number of deaths in 2015 [4]. In 2017, the number of illegal immigrants entering the EU dropped to about 204.300, a decrease of 500.000 in 2016.

An agreement between the EU and Turkey allowed to "disable" the main sea route linking Turkey and Greece, which played an important role in preventing large numbers of migrants from reaching Europe by sea. On another sea route, linking North Africa and Italy, the number of migrants to Europe decreased but the rate of reduction is lower. According to data from the Italian Ministry of Interior, 119,310 migrants traveled to Europe on this route in 2017, a third less than the figure recorded in 2016 [9].

Main routes of European migrants:

- Central Mediterranean (Italy and Malta): More than 120,000 migrants and refugees arrived in Europe via the Central Mediterranean between January and September. Most of them went on smuggling boats departing from Libya, Tunisia, or Egypt. This is an extremely dangerous route and is where the migration tragedy happened in October 2013 and April 2015, prompting the EU to call countries to launch an emergency response to deal with the situation. In 2015, this route was used less due to increased unrest in Libya, but remained the main route for migrants to Europe in Southern Sahara [7].

- Eastern Mediterranean (Greece/Aegean Sea): Eastern Mediterranean became the main maritime routes of migrants in 2015. More than 350.000 people crossed from Turkey to Greece (most of them to Greek islands such as Lesbos and Kos which are close to the Turkish coast) in the first nine months of 2015. The change of direction to Eastern Mediterranean was due to the fact that migrants of Syria found a new path which was easier and safer than the route to Europe from Turkey [10]. A short journey from Turkey to Greek islands takes only a few miles and safer than the roads in the Central Mediterranean. Some reports indicated that refugees could make their own journey without relying on smugglers.

- West Balkan (Hungary): More than 155.000 people crossed Serbia to enter Hungary between January and August. The two main groups that used this route were: people in the Western Balkans, especially from Kosovo and Albania, and migrants and refugees coming from the Greek to the rest of the European Union [5].

2. Impacts on global Covid-19 pandemic control.

Migrants, especially those such as migrant workers, irregular migrants, forced migrants and refugees, have much less access to health care than local residents. In addition, their living conditions are often in overcrowded and poor-sanitary conditions. This is especially true for people in camps for refugees and internal displaced people. The stress of people living in refugee camps makes them more vulnerable to diseases, including infectious and viral diseases. The COVID-19 pandemic has created a new driving force for the topic of Migration and Health online. Clearly, in countries with large numbers of migrants and refugees, responses to pandemics can only be effective if they include migrants and refugees.

All the quarantine measures that European countries are taking today can prove to be completely useless, with the presence of millions of refugees from Africa and Asia in Europe. Hundreds of thousands of people from Syria, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Libya, Somalia, Eritrea and many other countries live on the territory of the European Union in tents and do not have access to medical surveillance systems. This is an environment that is extremely favorable for the spread of all pandemics due to the limited access of people to the medical care needed, over crowdedness, poor sanitary and lack of food source.

In general, simple recommendations to combat pandemics, such as frequent and thorough hand washing or social distancing, are simply impossible in the crowded living conditions of forced migrants, even if they live in Greek refugee camps or in displaced camps in Syria (CBS 2020). However, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, there are currently about 70 million of forced migrants in the world, 26 million of whom are refugees.

Not only forced migrants, but also the so-called voluntary migrants, such as those who come to another country to work, often live in overcrowded. Their hygiene standards are so low that their response to disease control measures is impractical. The limited access of migrant workers to health and hygiene measures and practices makes the spread of a pandemic almost impossible to control.

Migration is itself a factor of instability that can affect the mental health of those involved. Uncertainty about the prospect of staying and working, separation from the family, changing lifestyles, a new, not always friendly social environment are common stressors for migrants. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the fear of getting sick and being left without medical care was added, along with general panic, fear of deportation or vice versa, and the inability to return home due to closed border. Losing one's job means being unable to send money home, which means the anxiety and responsibility for the family increase. In this situation, migrants can take desperate steps, while the social and psychological support from the migrant associations and human rights organizations is limited by the social distancing requirements.

The increasing politicization of the topic of migration is the characteristic of all large-scale crises: migrants are often declared as offenders and accountable to others. The coronavirus crisis is no exception: migrants are accused of transmitting the disease in some countries. Migrants from China were stigmatized, and xenophobia was at an early stage of the pandemic.

The ban on the movement of people, of course, will be lifted after the pandemic is controlled. However, there is a high possibility that the rules of movement will be tightened. It is

possible that the COVID-2019 pandemic will be the starting point that will fundamentally change the migration policies in most countries. The position of right-wing parties, characterized by anti-immigrant rhetoric measures, is intensifying. The idea of global action, coordinated management of migration focuses on the Global Compact on Legal, Safe and Ordered Migration (United Nations 2018), signed by 152 countries just a year ago, can be buried by the coronavirus pandemic, forcing countries to close border with conditional fences.

Governments in European countries have reacted quite differently towards the needs to cope with the presence of foreign residents on their territory during the pandemic. In general, the current crisis, which requires urgent action, is a test of the ability to adapt to unusual situations for governments.

The most positive example is Portugal, which gives citizenship temporarily to all foreigners (who had previously applied for citizenship, residence permit or temporary asylum) present on its territory. The aim is to ensure that these foreigners have full access to the national health system during the coronavirus pandemic, thereby ensuring the health security of the Portuguese people themselves. In Italy, all authorization documents held by migrants (residence permits, work permits, family reunification permits, student visas, etc.) expire during the quarantine period, are self-enforced. The extension will run until June 15, implying that the epidemiological situation will then be normalized and that administrative services will be operated as usual. On the other hand, some countries have not taken any steps even when their nationals were trapped in other countries, and some have urged their migrants not to return home.

3. What do European countries need to do?

In response to the consequences of the immigration crisis and the impacts on the Covid-19 pandemic, European countries need to take the following measures:

- Strengthen joint operations in the Mediterranean, in particular the Triton and Poseidon patrol campaigns, by increasing financial resources and the number of assets, expanding the scope of operations, allowing Frontex to take more interventions. Frontex has disbanded many sophisticated human trafficking organizations, bringing people from West Africa, Afghanistan and the Middle East into the EU. To do this, it is very important to share intelligence between the police and national security agencies. Europol, the EU police agency, has attempted to focus on cross-border trafficking. The EU needs better cooperation with outside countries such as China, Turkey and Russia, where there are many cross-border trafficking activities or transshipment hubs of such activities
- The European Union's law enforcement agency (EUROPOL), FRONTEX, European Asylum Support Office (EASO) and the EU's Judicial Cooperation Unit (EUROJUST) will meet regularly and work closely to gather information on modes of operating smuggling, to monitor, support their investigation, and enhance border and coast control. In order to reduce the influx of migrants into the EU, the EU has tripled its border protection force to assist in rescuing refugees as well as dealing with human trafficking. The statistics show that, with more than 5,000 migrants killed in the Mediterranean, 2016 was the year with the most deaths - exceeding 1,300 compared to 2015. Since the beginning of 2017, there have been about 1,800 migrants died at sea. In June 2017 alone, the number of dead and missing migrants at sea reached 1,622.
- Confiscation and destruction of vessels transporting illegal immigrants;
- The European Union and its member countries have carried out the documentation process and strict management of immigrants by fingerprinting and managing the immigration system when migrants come to Europe;
- Deploy immigration liaison officers (ILO) in key third countries to gather intelligence on migration flows and to strengthen the role of EU delegations;
- Deploy EASO teams to Italy and Greece to handle asylum applications; Consider options for emergency evacuation mechanism and an emergency resettlement mechanism; Set up a new reimbursement program to quickly bring illegal immigrants back to their country of origin, which is coordinated by Frontex from frontline member countries;

- Commit to Libya's neighbors through a coordinated effort between the Commission and the European External Action Service (EEAS); EU implements a voluntary resettlement pilot project to provide shelters for those in need of protection.

IV. Conclusion

In the context of Europe being considered a "promised land" within the next half century, the flow of migrants to the continent will be inevitable. The International Organization for Migration also said that it is difficult to estimate the number of refugees and migrants to Europe in the following years while the parties have not found a solution to the Syrian civil war. The EU is in a very difficult time. How to maintain the common values that this union has built so hard, how to prevent the influx of immigrants and control the Covid-19 pandemic? Those are big questions that need the cooperation of European governments.

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