

# **The European Union International Migration and Its Implications for ASEAN Countries**

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## **Abstract**

*International migration is an objective phenomenon in the globalization process. In recent years, many countries have faced many difficulties and challenges brought about by international migration, including ASEAN countries. The international migration crisis poses many complex economic - political - cultural - social problems for ASEAN countries, requiring close cooperation among countries in the region to overcome difficulties and challenges brought about by international migration. In this article, the authors study international migration issues as well as the EU's case, then give some recommendations for ASEAN countries to actively respond to this phenomenon, contributing to promoting economic growth and development in the region.*

**Keywords:** International migration, Migration, European Union, EU, ASEAN

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## **I. Introduction**

International migration in the trend of globalization with new developments requires corresponding specialized and interdisciplinary science development to identify and simultaneously construct scientific arguments to intervene in policy as well as building a theoretical framework for basic research and fill the gap between the sciences. On this basis, the research is also to supplement and develop the theory of international migration. By applying documentary research method, descriptive statistics based on secondary data, the article provides a comparison of international migration status among some countries and regions, especially those in the EU. This is an important basis for the authors to propose a policy on immigration governance for ASEAN countries in the current context.

## **II. Research Methodology**

### **2.1. The method of data collection**

This study used secondary data collected from the reports of the studies related to international migration, such as from General Statistics Office, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, information from seminars and through related scientific journals.

### **2.2. The method of data analysis**

**Descriptive statistics:** Using data on the size and status of international migration to calculate and describe the situation of international migration activities in the European Union (EU) and ASEAN countries over time. In the past, the descriptive method is also shown by pointing out the effects of international migration on all areas of social life in these areas.

**Comparative statistics:** Used to assess the practice of international migration in some regions of the world, specifically comparing similarities and differences between international migrants in the EU and ASEAN, thereby identifying problems posed to ASEAN countries. This is the basis for the author to propose policies when dealing with international migration for ASEAN countries today.

### III. Research results

#### 3.1. International migration and the impact of moving people internationally

##### 3.1.1. International migration

Migration is the movement of a population, including human movement, regardless of length, composition or cause; it also includes refugee migration (Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, 1951), migration of refugees, economic migration and migration of those who move for other purposes, including family reunion. International Organization for Migration (IOM) also stated that international migration is a form of cross-border movement of one or a few countries, leading to the change of the legal status of an individual. International migration also includes the movement of refugees, refugees and individuals forced to leave home (International Organization for Migration, 2003).

As defined by the United Nations, migration is the movement from one area to another, usually over an administrative geographical area or a movement over a certain distance, carried out in a certain period of time accompanied by a change of residence. UN also defines migrant as an individual who has resided in a country for more than a year, regardless of being voluntary or not, legal or illegal. With this implication, people who travel for a short time such as tourists or businessmen are not considered migrants (Dang Nguyen Anh, 2016). Although there are many different interpretations of the concept of migration, there must be three common elements: the space element; time factor and social networks of migrants.

In migration research, it is necessary to mention the term *migrant* because this is a key factor in immigration research. However, according to the definition of the United Nations, migrants include people moving within the scope of living area regardless of residence time at the destination. (United Nations, 2010).

Regarding individuals, social groups, communities, migration is the movement of "place of residence". In each state, depending on different factors, there can be specific different names. When there is a natural disaster that leads to relocation to a safer place, it is called an *evacuation* and the people are called *evacuees*. When immigrant has to flee to another place to escape danger from wars, sabotage or persecution by a power in the residence, it is called *evacuation*, the people are called *refugees*; People who evacuate to another country without permission from that country are called illegal *immigrants*. For example, in 2015, due to war in the Middle East, more than 1 million refugees arrived in Germany causing an immigration crisis and a major structural impact on the country's population ("Unstoppable series of migration into Europe", 2018).

In the scope of this study, the terms evacuation and migration are synonyms, used to describe in different situations and contexts, avoiding repetitive words. It can be understood that *international migration is a concept that refers to the status of population migration from one region to another, from one country to another.*

##### 3.1.2. The impact of international migration on all areas of social life

Migration affects all sectors of social life, leaves many complex consequences to the society, and poses many problems for the management of the society, that is:

**Impact on population issues, labor and employment:** Immigration inevitably results in reducing the population density in the country of leaving and increasing population density in the destination country. The increase and decrease of the population is related to the problem of labor and employment of countries. It could create a labor shortage in one country and a labor surplus in another or it could meet the labor demand of the destination country or region. Thus, migrants will also create pressure on employment, especially countries with many labor migrants, and thus cause potential social instability. This will lead to other consequences related to social and political security, social order, stability and development of the local society. This is because poverty is the "economic basis" of social evils.

**Impact on Social Security:** Social Security could be defined in two ways:

**The first way:** Social Security is a social activity including social insurance, social relief and social assistance activities (hunger eradication and poverty alleviation; supports in cases of natural disasters or epidemics);

**The second way:** Social Security is the political and social stability of the social dimension. All citizens are guaranteed food, accommodation, clothing, travel, education, health care, and comprehensive personality development. It is associated with progress, equality and social justice.

Overall, migration affects significantly to implement social insurance, social protection, social support and guarantee of accommodation, food, clothing, transportation, education, medical treatment, personality development for migrants. Not only free migration, but also for organized migration, ensuring social security for migrants also faces many difficulties and obstacles.

**Impact on social community:** Migration creates the movement of population from one place to another, from one country to another; at the same time that, process is the disruption of community in the place and building community of the destination. Building community in the destination places takes time, with the combined efforts of both the resident communities and immigrants, under the management of the government of the country of immigration.

Migration creates spillovers, acculturation and cultural conflict between local residents (indigenous people and migrants). Therefore, it is not easy to shape the social community where people have migrated. The difference in customs and living practices along with other conflicts that arise in the production and living process will divide, possibly leading to social conflicts between the native population and the migrant population. Building a socio-cultural environment in places where people have migrated is an objective requirement in social management.

**Impact on political security, social order and social safety:** For security and political issues, migration affects the security and politics on the main areas: effects of government management on society, and results of the fight against terrorist conspiracy and violence by hostile forces. In theory, terrorists can take advantage of loose borders to break into a country of immigration.

Regarding the issue of social order and safety, migration is a factor that increases crime, social evils, and social conflicts in the locality where migrants arrive. It is even more complicated when immigrants are unemployed or face difficulties in life. The issue of maintaining social order and safety is always a hot issue in countries and regions where people have migrated to live.

**Impact on social management:** Migration is a social phenomenon, with a very complicated process, affecting all fields of social life, social groups, social communities, stability maintenance, and society development in a sustainable direction. In order for social development to reach its set goals, all governments and social polities must grasp and control the migration process, forcing it to comply with the laws of the host country.

### **3.2. International migration in the EU and ASEAN**

#### **3.2.1. Migration in the European Union (EU)**

The feature of migration in the EU are immigrants. Since 2015, about 1.1 million people from the countries of Syria, Iraq and Libya have sought ways to migrate to Europe to avoid the civil war in Syria; of which, Greece is one of the 6 countries receiving the largest number of refugees with about 821 thousand people, accounting for 80%. Italy is also home to 150,000 people across the sea; Bulgaria has welcome nearly 30,000 people and Spain has welcome more than 3,800 people, creating the worst migration crisis in Europe since the 1990s. From 2017 to now, there has been about 100 thousand migrants crossing the sea to get to Europe, of which about 85 thousand people came to Italy from Libya and about 2,200 people lost their lives before reaching Europe (Dau Tuan Nam, 2017).

Facing this situation, in 2015, the EU approved a resettlement plan for 120,000 asylum seekers, a number that is thousand times higher than the number of people granted immigration permits or temporary protection by Western European countries in 2014. Germany was the host country of 40,560 asylum seekers in 2014 and by the end of 2015, 1.1 million refugees had come to Germany, not to mention the number of unregistered people, far exceeding the number of 800 thousand previously predicted by the government (Goldenziel, 2015; Nguyen Huu Trang, 2016).

Immigration to the EU stems from many reasons, but three basic reasons can be seen:

*First*, immigrants enter the EU as refugees as, according to international law and most Western countries, when refugees flee their home countries because they have grounds to fear persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or being a member of a particular social group, no country has the right to send refugees back where their lives could be threatened, regardless of that country, regardless of whether that country has signed United Nations Convention on Refugees or not.

*Second*, migrants from war-affected countries turn to the EU to seek asylum in the context of wars and conflicts in some Middle Eastern countries and North Africa. According to the representative of the United Nations High

Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), in the first 9 months of 2015, more than 620,000 people registered asylum in Europe. Among them, in July 2015 only, the number of refugees to Europe was around 137,000.

*Third*, immigrants enter the EU in search of job opportunities - "economic migration".

Most of these are living in uncertainty, poverty, unemployment in the host country, but hope to find better job opportunities in the EU.

Waves of mass migration into Europe has created significant instability on all aspects of politics, economy and society for Europe. Firstly, there is chaos on security and social order in a number of countries, especially in border-gate areas and transport hub systems. Second, the migration crisis has created an economic burden on most European countries, especially in the context of the public debt crisis in the Eurozone so far has not been resolved. Third, pressure from the waves of emigration to Europe has deepened political disagreements within the EU.

### **3.2.2. International migration in ASEAN**

Compared to the EU, migration in ASEAN countries has both in- and out- migration, but mainly out-migration - migrants leaving ASEAN countries in search of a better population. International migration activities in ASEAN countries in recent years have been very active. The integration policy along with the "opening breeze" (renovation) has created favorable conditions for the citizens of ASEAN countries to go abroad increasingly, diversified in forms and complex in nature. Similar to other developing countries, ASEAN countries are facing opportunities and challenges due to the impact of this activity.

Crisis immigrants in Myanmar in 2015 is caused mainly from the issue of race and religion, causing the Rohingya Muslim immigrants to flee in large numbers, more than 2,600 people after more than 3,000 people landed in Indonesia and Malaysia in May 2015 (<http://nld.com.vn>).

In Vietnam, the migration crisis does not take place directly, but the country is involved in and affected by the migration crisis. First of all, regarding the labor migration crisis in 2011 in Libya, Vietnam resolves to bring 10,500 workers home. This situation continued to repeat in 2014, when Vietnam organized the admission of 1,700 workers due to the Libyan issue and in 2011, Vietnam evacuated 450 students and interns in Fukushima (Japan) due to Impact from earthquakes and tsunamis (Ly Quoc Tuan, 2015). In another context, the Lithuanian border guards recently discovered a secret route bringing hundreds of Vietnamese working in Russia. Due to the economic downturn, they had to find work by migrating into Europe (Ba Do, Nguyen Hai, Ngoc Thanh, Duc Hung, 2019). Thus, although not directly, the international migration crisis (of which Vietnam is the country of origin) is also quite complicated and consequently, the international migration crisis has enormously affected Vietnam in political aspects, socio-economic and external relations.

In addition, ASEAN countries mainly the agricultural nations, and their economic life is difficult. Furthermore, the climate change and urbanization process have reduced arable land, leading to a part of farmers to change jobs. Therefore, they join the labor export market to find jobs, get out of poverty and become richer. Apart from the labor export in accordance with the official system, there is still illegal labor export with many potential risks. The case of 39 Vietnamese deaths in container in Essex, United Kingdom occurred in 2019 (Ba Do, Nguyen Hai, Ngoc Thanh, Duc Hung, 2019). These victims mainly come from rural areas of Vietnam in the provinces of Hai Duong, Hai Phong, Nghe An, Ha Tinh, Quang Binh and Thua Thien - Hue.

Recently, because the COVID-19 pandemic, a global epidemic of infectious disease with the agent of the virus SARS-CoV-2, is taking place on a global scale and causing economic recession, many governments have taken steps to encourage international citizens to return. However, many international migrants still try to stay in the country where they immigrated, although the conditions in these countries are no longer "ideal" as before but still much better than their homeland. According to a UNICEF report, since the appearance of the pandemic up to October 2020, 31 million children have been displaced from their homes, of which there are more than 17 million inbound migrants, 12.7 million refugees and 1.1 million asylum seekers. All need some forms of assistance. Most of them are unable to access medical services when being sick, wash their hands whenever they need or practice keeping a distance to prevent transmission.

### **3.3. *ASEAN International Migration – Issues and Recommendations***

#### **3.3.1. Issues posed to ASEAN countries**

*First*, from the situation outlined above shows, the line of immigrants - refugees is often not only high in number, but also increases exponentially (in a short time) and distributes unevenly (all focused on some countries), thus putting pressure and great challenge for the immigrant countries to seek ways to solve this difficult

problem. Meanwhile, in some populous countries in ASEAN such as Thailand, Indonesia, Vietnam, when there is a flow of migration from outside, it will create great pressure on economy, politics, culture and society.

*Second*, the massive wave of immigrants will create chaos in public order, especially in border and transportation systems of some countries. Meanwhile, the situation that extremists can infiltrate the influx of refugees to enter regional nations and carry out terrorist activities should not be excluded. Therefore, the current migration crisis has directly threatened the security of many countries, especially those with long border lines such as Vietnam and Thailand.

*Third*, the crisis migration causes an economic burden to most immigrant countries as they have to share resources for the work of humanitarian aid on food, health care for refugees. It also causes heavy damages tourism revenue. In addition, the reception of a large number of refugees will pose many challenges in solving accommodation and employment while unemployment in most countries in the region has not been overcome.

*Fourth*, pressure from waves of immigrants lead to concerns about the threat of terrorism (through migration path). Countries with unstable political systems such as Thailand and Indonesia will face many challenges of terrorism when they are under pressure from international immigration.

### **3.3.2. Some recommendations**

In the context of globalization and international integration, the issue of management and control of migration requires countries to actively respond to migration crisis. From the perspective of international cooperation, besides continuing to stabilize the macro-economy, well implementing the millennium development goals and eradicating poverty, ASEAN needs:

- ASEAN countries need to narrow the gap between urban and rural areas, since this is the most sustainable, long-term and effective solution to this phenomenon in ASEAN countries. Because when this differentiation is narrowed, the increased quality of life and intellectual level of the people will reduce the risk of migration outside of the country;
- ASEAN countries need to develop mechanisms and policies to support immigrants and their own people when legal international migrants are able to integrate into the host community and find work;
- Promote legal immigration, prevent illegal migration, ensure safe migration, protect legal rights and interests of migrants;
- Actively cooperate in cross-border fields to well manage their country's migration and avoid massive migration waves that affects the image of ASEAN countries; build a legal system to resettle refugees and attract appropriately qualified manpower; to prevent and combat the crime of human trafficking and well complete the work of citizen protection;
- Promote cooperation with all countries in the region and internationally to share experiences and information on migration; promote economic and diplomatic efforts in order to help countries in the region to stabilize the situation, eliminate terrorists, mark an end to the conflict, restore peace to resolve the current immigration crisis in a fundamental and long-term way, contributing to stabilizing the security, socio-economic situation and people's life in the ASEAN region.

## **IV. Conclusion**

Although the structure of cooperation between the EU and ASEAN in the field of migration, the causes and developments are not exactly the same, there are certain suggestions for ASEAN countries as well. Because migration has become one of serious global issues, transcending the whole continent, but this problem can only be solved from the root cause of each country and each region. On the contrary, for each country and each region to effectively deal with the dark sides of migration, close cooperation between countries is required, in which mechanisms such as the EU and ASEAN will play a very important role.

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