

New Bruegel Blueprint

'Divisions of labour: rethinking Europe's migration policy'

By: *Jakob von Weizsäcker*

Bruegel's latest Blueprint examines why and how Europe's migration challenge should be urgently addressed. **Jakob Von Weizsäcker** identifies 3 priority areas for EU policy action and concrete policy suggestions which could fit with the current immigration agenda of the French presidency:

1. **High-skilled migration.** For the EU to successfully participate in the global competition for talent, the Blue Card needs to become more readily transferable so that it genuinely offers access to the entire EU labour market. At the same time, concerns about brain drain should be taken seriously, by offering developing countries an opt-out clause.
2. **Irregular migration.** The EU agenda on irregular migration must be balanced to succeed. Tighter controls should be combined with better humanitarian standards and an agreement on continuous 'earned regularisation' as a realistic alternative to sporadic mass regularisations.
3. **Asylum.** Asylum applications in Europe have dropped considerably in recent years while wars and political persecution continue. In order for Europe to help refugees more effectively, a 'new Nansen' scheme offering 25,000 additional humanitarian immigration slots per year is proposed, the funding and allocation of which are to be organised at European level.

Jakob von Weizsäcker shows that classic immigration countries such as Australia and Canada manage to attract more skilled immigrants than countries like France or Germany which both have restrictive immigration policies with low-skill bias. Moreover, some 4 to 8 million irregular migrants are living in the EU27, with as many as half a million more arriving each year. According to **von Weizsäcker**, rising immigration pressure from the EU's wider neighbourhood could result in further increase in the stock of illegal immigrants, and warns that proximity migration, similar to the massive influx of migrants from Mexico to the US, may play a much more important role for the EU in the future. It is striking, for instance, that there has been a substantial migration flow from Bulgaria and Romania into the EU15 during the past few years, although both countries were not part of the EU before 2007.

Under the Hague programme which extends until 2010, the EU is already starting to develop a common European immigration policy. But progress to date has been limited, and the failed Irish referendum on the Lisbon Treaty in early 2008 further delays the introduction of much needed qualified majority voting on immigration policy.

The blueprint underlines 3 main migration challenges for Europe:

1. **Flow.** Migratory pressure is on the increase as the populations of poorer countries in the greater neighbourhood of the European Union become more mobile.
2. **Stock.** If EU member states' integration policies fail, large ethnic lower classes may become a permanent feature in the EU.
3. **Talent.** Global competition for high-skilled workers has intensified while the EU struggles to attract and retain top talent.

You can purchase a hard copy of the Blueprint or download the Blueprint [here](#) free of charge.

To view our Q&A on the Blueprint 'European Union migration policy: taking stock', please click [here](#)

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