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## Opening the floodgates?

European migration under  
restrictive and liberal border  
regimes 1950–2010

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## Abstract

The effect of ‘open borders’ on migration has been the subject of substantial controversy. Political rhetoric and media images help stoke fear of uncontrolled mass migration that in turn fuels arguments in favour of tighter immigration regulations and border controls to ‘bring migration back under control’. In public debates, removing migration barriers is frequently portrayed as tantamount to ‘opening the floodgates’. However, immigration liberalisation may increase also circulation and return, rendering the effect on net migration theoretically ambiguous. Drawing on bilateral flow data over the 1959-2010 period contained in the DEMIG C2C database, this paper uses European Union (EU) enlargement as a case study to assess how liberalising border regimes affected migration flows. The analysis suggests that, with some exceptions, liberalisation boosted circulation rather than led to a structural increase in intra-EU migration. While removing migration barriers can lead to migration surges—particularly when economic gaps between origin and destination countries are large—these tend to be temporary, after which migration becomes more circular and tends to consolidate at lower levels. And while intra-regional circulation in the EU has grown, closing external EU borders has increasingly pushed non-EU migrants into permanent settlement along with significant family migration. These factors help to explain the structural rise in non-EU immigration, defying policy expectations that opening internal borders would decrease non-EU immigration.

**Keywords:** international migration, European Union, free mobility, migration policies, border regimes

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# 1 Introduction

Politicians worldwide regularly express the wish to reduce or limit immigration, including labour and family migration, as well as refugee flows. Their standard recipe for achieving this goal (and showing citizens they are serious), especially in the West, centres on stepping up immigration restrictions and increasing border controls. As the United Kingdom's 2016 Brexit vote shows, departing the European Union, with its free mobility zones, can be seen as an attempt to bring migration back under sovereign state control. The UK's experience of large-scale, much-higher-than-anticipated immigration from Poland during the 2000s (Okólski and Salt 2014), along with the large-scale movement of Syrian refugees to Europe in 2015, have fuelled Europeans' perception that the absence of migration restrictions leads to uncontrollable migration. For instance, in 2015, Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte warned that Europe would face the same fate as the Roman Empire if refugee migration to Europe would not be contained.<sup>1</sup> US President Donald Trump and other American politicians use similar discourses to promote building a wall along the entire US-Mexico border and to limit asylum claims from Central Americans arriving at the southern border.

The crucial question is how effective such restrictive measures are in practice. Many scholars have argued that immigration controls often fail to meet their objectives (cf. Castles 2004; Düvell 2009), mainly because migration policies do not address the underlying causes of migration, such as labour demand in destination countries or conflict in origin countries. Therefore, migration restrictions would primarily alter people's migration *strategies*—such as using different itineraries—rather than preventing them from migrating in the first place (de Haas et al. 2018). The obvious counter-argument is that restrictions reduce immigration, particularly in the longer-term, and that contemporary immigration would have been much higher without controls. In particular, proponents of stringent immigration controls argue that opening borders would be tantamount to 'opening the floodgates'. However, the effectiveness of migration restrictions can potentially be undermined if they spur migrants to permanently settle as well as interrupt circulation and return, as evidence on Mexico to the US has for instance shown (Massey, Durand and Pren 2016; Czaika and de Haas 2017). Because migration restrictions simultaneously reduce immigration and return, their effect on *net* migration—and, hence, the settlement and growth of immigrant populations—is theoretically uncertain.

This article uses the enlargement process of the European Union (EU) as a case study to assess how liberalising internal border regimes affects migration. So far, few studies have systematically analysed

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<sup>1</sup> While this is an obvious allusion to the 'Barbaric invasion', it ignores historical evidence that the so-called Barbaric invasions were not as large-scale as sometimes imagined. Also, the invasions did not cause the collapse of the Roman Empire but rather reflected the internal weakening of the Roman Empire (see Hearder 1990).

the *short-* and *long-term* impacts of immigration policies on regional migration processes. The EU's enlargement process presents a suitable 'natural experiment' for studying the short-term and long-term implications of liberal versus restrictive border regimes for regional migration patterns. As the European Union expanded multiple times between 1981 and 2014, restrictions on mobility and migration between 19 new member states and the previous 9 member countries were gradually lifted. Alongside the creation of the Schengen zone, a visa-free travel zone in the EU with no border checks, EU enlargement coincided with the EU's closure towards many non-EU origin countries, particularly through new travel visa requirements.

The EU enlargement case therefore enables us to study the long-term implications of the *internal* lifting as well as *external* imposition of border restrictions. Such a long-term and regional perspective is necessary because focusing on how, in the short term, policy measures affect migration flows between two countries can lead us to overestimate the effects of such measures. For example, initial migration spikes following a liberalisation might level off after a few years and stabilise at lower levels once prospective migrants trust that borders will stay open and more migrants start to adopt a more circulatory migration pattern (Czaika and de Haas 2017). Focusing solely on the short term will not capture such effects. This is why it is important to distinguish the longer- and shorter-term consequences of immigration policy interventions. Hence, scholars need to apply research methodologies that capture the long-term effects of migration policies on immigration and emigration within broader regional migration systems. Furthermore, properly understanding the effectiveness of policies requires investigating both the *short-* and *long-term* implications of policies for migration *processes* within entire *migration systems*.

## **2 'Opening the floodgates'? The open versus closed borders controversy**

Political rhetoric and media images about illegal border crossings reinforce the idea that 'open borders' equal 'opening the floodgates'. In this context, politicians often refer to the 'honeypot effect' (*efecto llamada* in Spanish; *aanzuigende werking* in Dutch), which suggests that open borders and/or migrant amnesties (also known as regularisations) attract waves of new migrants. For instance, it is often believed that the large-scale campaigns to regularise migrants' legal status in Spain over the 2000s stimulated new migrants to cross borders illegally through the *efecto llamada* (call-to-effect) (Sabater and Domingo 2012). In 2015, many European politicians and commentators argued that German Chancellor Angela Merkel's decision to welcome Syrian refugees triggered a massive spike in maritime and overland migration of asylum seekers from Turkey to Germany through Greece and

the Balkans. While such claims are heavily contested (Le Gloannec 2016), the assumption that ‘open borders’ will trigger mass immigration is rather widespread.

However, other observations challenge this idea, posing puzzles for migration scholarship. For instance, politicians, employers, researchers and other observers expected the EU free migration zone, as well as its eastward expansion, to significantly increase labour mobility, leading to better matching of skills and jobs, lower unemployment, higher productivity and economic growth. This group also expected that increased intra-EU mobility would decrease immigration from non-EU countries such as Morocco, Turkey and Ukraine. However, with a few exceptions—particularly Eastern European migration to the UK—intra-European migration has remained lower than anticipated, despite the existence of considerable differences in unemployment and salary levels between European countries.<sup>2</sup> Concurrently, continued immigration from ‘third countries’ (located outside the EU) also defies the policy expectation that allowing Eastern European labour would largely remove the demand for non-EU labour.

Furthermore, the ‘open’ versus ‘closed’ borders debate reveals three serious conceptual and methodological shortcomings. First, the opposition between ‘open’ and ‘closed’ borders is a false dichotomy that ignores the more complex realities of migration policymaking. In fact, and although political rhetoric may suggest otherwise, contemporary migration policies are decreasingly about the wholesale closure or opening of borders (de Haas et al. 2018). Instead of imposing absolute limits and quota, real-world migration policies have increasingly focused on the *selection* of migrants rather than on controlling numbers *per se*. In other words, notwithstanding political rhetoric focusing on limiting the *numbers* of migrants coming in, most migration policies aim to increase the ability of states to control *who* is allowed to immigrate (de Haas, Natter and Vezzoli 2016 ).

A second shortcoming of many analyses has been their focus on the short term. It is important to adopt a long-term perspective so that scholars and politicians are not blind-sighted by short-term immigration spikes that follow liberalised immigration regimes, events such as the fall of the Berlin Wall (Decressin 1994), or, conversely, a short-term drop in immigration as an immediate reaction to more restrictive immigration policies (Peach 1968). From a theoretical point of view, the long-term effects of immigration restrictions are rather ambiguous, because immigration restrictions can have unforeseen knock-on effects that limit their effectiveness. In this context, we can hypothesise four ‘substitution effects’: 1) *spatial substitution* through the diversion of migration to or via other destinations; 2) *categorical substitution* through a reorientation of migration into other legal or

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<sup>2</sup> For example, in 2016 the unemployment rate in Greece was 23.6 percent, and only 4.8 percent for the UK (Eurostat, 2016); and €42,000 is the average annual gross earnings in Germany compared to €5,869 in Romania (Eurostat, 2011).

irregular channels; 3) *inter-temporal substitution* affecting the timing of migration, such as ‘now or never migration’, when people expect tightened policies in the near future; and 4) *reverse flow substitution*, when immigration restrictions reduce return migration, interrupt circulation and push migrants into permanent settlement (see de Haas, 2011).

Substitution effects that occur simultaneously may explain why restrictions and border controls have apparently failed to curb migration in some important migration corridors, such as between Mexico and the US (Massey and Pren 2012) and Morocco and traditional EU destinations such as France, the Netherlands, Belgium and Germany (de Haas 2014). In both migration corridors, after a period of relatively unrestricted low-skilled labour recruitment from the mid-1940s through the 1960s, growing restrictions on low-skilled migration and border controls in the 1970s increased migrants’ reliance on family migration, overstaying of tourist visas and, to a lesser extent, unauthorized border crossing<sup>3</sup> (*categorical substitution*). Immigration restrictions also interrupted circular movements and family migration, further encouraging long-term and, eventually, permanent settlement (*reverse flow substitution*). At the same time, restrictions and anti-immigrant attitudes in traditional European destinations have encouraged Moroccans to explore new EU destinations in Spain, Italy and further away in North America. In response to California’s anti-immigrant policies in the 1990s and high cost of living, Mexican migrants have increasingly explored new destinations within the US that need low-skilled labour and traditionally have smaller foreign-born populations, such as Georgia and Iowa (Leach and Bean 2008) (*spatial substitution*).

Studying substitution effects requires a long-term view. For instance, if we wish to assess the implications of liberal and restrictive immigration regimes on when people migrate (*intertemporal substitution*), we need to study pre- and post-measure migration trends and patterns over several decades. In his study of the unintended migratory effects of the UK’s restrictive 1962 Commonwealth Immigration Act on migration from British Caribbean colonies to the UK, Peach (1968) observed that looking only at the immediate post-policy effects would have led to the misleading conclusion that the policy had worked. In fact, the Act generated a ‘beat the ban’ migration rush that preceded the sudden drop once the Act came into effect. In order to understand how restrictions affect circulation (*reverse flow substitution*), we need to study the effects of migration policies on immigration and emigration *simultaneously*. The balance between the effects on inflows and outflows will eventually determine the effect on *net immigration* and the growth of immigrant communities. Such analyses require bilateral data on inflows and outflows between sets of countries over longer time periods.

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<sup>3</sup> The relative importance of unauthorized border crossings compared to other migration channels is often exaggerated by politicians and the media. Most unauthorized migrants in the EU and US migrated legally but stayed after their tourist visa or temporary work permit expired; through this process regular migrants ‘become’ irregular.

A third methodological shortcoming of most empirical research literature is their focus on the statistical effects of year-by-year policy changes between pairs of countries. While numerical changes yield important insights into substitution effects, such analyses do not fully capture the complex effects of changing migration regimes on entire migration systems. To understand how a destination country's restrictions affect migration from the same origin country to other destination countries (*spatial substitution*), we cannot limit ourselves to studying how policies affect migration within one corridor. Rather, we must examine how policies may affect migration to other countries. While a policy may seem successful from the short-term perspective of one country (and therefore yielding considerable electoral dividend) it may be less successful from a regional perspective.

For instance, in their analysis of annual migration flow data covering 38 countries over the 1970-2010 period, Czaika and de Haas (2017) assessed how introducing and removing travel visa requirements impacted the volume and timing of immigration and emigration. The analysis revealed that visa requirements significantly decreased inflows (with an average magnitude of 67 percent), while also decreasing outflows (88 percent on average) of the same migrant groups, yielding a circulation-interrupting effect of 75 percent on average<sup>4</sup>. These results confirmed that significant *reverse flow substitution* effects exist. Their study also found that the effects of introducing versus removing visa restrictions are asymmetrical. Removing visa requirements tended to have an almost immediate effect, with migration rapidly increasing for one to three years, after which they temporarily 'overshot' these levels for several years to consolidate at much lower levels after such initial post-liberalisation migration spikes. By contrast, introducing visa requirements had a delayed and generally weaker effect. On average, it took more than five years before immigration declined in a statically significant way. Migrant networks that facilitate flows (for instance, through family migration) in established migration corridors probably explain these delayed and partial effects of visa restrictions.

Overall, while empirical studies on the effects of individual policy changes can yield very detailed and precise insights into the average effects of particular policy measures, they generally cannot capture the complex interactions between different substitution effects. Such studies are less useful for assessing the long-term consequences of 'accumulated policies'—such as the wholesale liberalisation or tightening of border regimes—on complex regional migration dynamics. Their focus on *average effects* between pairs of countries means they give limited insights into factors that may explain variations across countries and migrant groups. For instance, while EU enlargement has generated large-scale migration from Central and Eastern Europe to the UK, migration from this region to many

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<sup>4</sup> Circulation was measured as the sum of inflow and outflows within one migration corridors. This means that in visa-constrained migration corridors, the overall volume of people migrating across borders in either way is 75 percent lower, on average, compared to corridors where there is no visa restriction.

other established EU countries, such as Germany and the Netherlands, has been comparatively modest (Engbersen, Snel and De Boom 2010). It is important to understand such differences.

In order to address these conceptual and empirical gaps, this paper studies how liberalising intra-European border regimes, alongside continued or increasing restrictions for non-EU countries as the EU enlarged, has affected migration flows. The analysis focuses in particular on the short- and long-term trends and patterns of immigration and emigration within the EU and across external EU borders to capture some of these effects.

### **3 Methodology and data**

In assessing the effects of border regimes, the central methodological problem is the absence of a real counterfactual. Because a concrete historical occurrence never repeats itself under exactly the same circumstances, we can never be absolutely sure what would have happened if, for instance, the EU would not have liberalised migration between its member states, or if the US would not have limited legal migration from Mexico. However, a ‘second best’, or alternative, methodological approach is to study real historical cases in which countries or groups of countries switched simultaneously from relatively liberal to relatively restrictive immigration regimes, or vice versa. Such ‘historical counterfactuals’ allow us to study the long-term implications of changing border regimes on migration system dynamics.

Decolonisation provides one such example. Citizens of (previous) colonies, who once enjoyed free mobility rights to the colonising country, suddenly need visas and immigration permits. In this context, Vezzoli (2015) argued that the three adjacent countries of (formerly British) Guyana, (formerly Dutch) Suriname and French Guiana (a French department) provide a ‘second best’, ‘quasi-experimental’ case for studying how different colonial and post-colonial trajectories affect the migration and mobility patterns of these geographically contiguous, and historically rather similar, countries. Vezzoli found that Guyanese and Surinamese citizens emigrated in great numbers and stayed abroad after independence and the establishment of a closed border regime with the colonising nation. In contrast, most French Guianese, who, as French citizens, have continued to enjoy free mobility to France and the European Union, have had very low permanent emigration rates. The decolonisation example highlights how introducing border regimes post-independence not only generated short-term emigration peaks, but also encouraged permanent forms of emigration and discouraged return migration.

This paper, therefore, uses a historical comparative method that evaluates how changing border regimes affected migration patterns to, from and between multiple countries in the same region over several decades. Our whole-region, historical approach complements statistical methods. While the latter are essential for assessing how particular migration policies affected flows and the occurrence, magnitude and timing of specific substitution effects, they seem less suitable for providing a comprehensive macro-assessment of how changing migration regimes (usually comprising a multitude of policy measures) impact the evolution of entire migration systems over time. A historical comparative method allows us to study how entire migration *regimes* evolve by analysing changes in migration and mobility patterns and assessing to what extent and how these changes can be related to shifting migration policy regimes.

Our analyses draw on the DEMIG C2C ('country-to-country') database, compiled by the University of Oxford's International Migration Institute and covering bilateral migration flow data between 34 reporting countries and a worldwide range of origin/destination countries over the 1946-2011 period (see Vezzoli, Villares-Varela and de Haas 2014).<sup>5</sup> Included in DEMIG C2C is yearly data on emigration and immigration to and from EU countries for all 19 countries that have joined the EU since 1981. Although DEMIG C2C data enables us to assess long-term trends and patterns in EU migration, it also has some limitations. First, most unauthorized migration is not captured in the data, with some exceptions, notably Spain, where unauthorized migrants are often included in official municipal registers. However, undocumented migrants often appear later in official statistics, sometimes as a result of regularisation campaigns ('amnesties') or when migrants feel safe to register (for instance, after their home country joins the EU and they can legally work). This may mean that the migration peaks frequently registered around EU accession may be *partly* be inflated because previously unauthorized migrants legally surface. The data are also likely to underestimate short-term circular migration, in which people may come and/or work for a few months but do not bother to register. The same goes for groups living semi-permanently in countries like Spain, such as retirees and other EU citizens, who often do not formally register as migrants. Finally, countries do not measure migration the same way<sup>6</sup>, and some countries in the database lack comprehensive data. This

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<sup>5</sup> Data collection for this database was part of the DEMIG (Determinants of International Migration) project funded by the European Research Council (ERC). DEMIG C2C contains data on annual bilateral 'country-to-country' migration flows by country of residence (COR), citizenship (COC) and birth (COB), and contains about 50,000 data points. For the full detail of the reported countries and data availability (year range and reporting criteria), see [https://www.imi-n.org/files/data/overview-of-database-content-table\\_june-2015.pdf](https://www.imi-n.org/files/data/overview-of-database-content-table_june-2015.pdf).

<sup>6</sup> A detailed breakdown of the different categories of flow data used (country of residence, citizenship or birth) and reporting countries can be found in the Appendix.

applies particularly to the UK<sup>7</sup>, where data are largely reported in aggregated form, so that origin-country-specific flow data are often unavailable.

Notwithstanding these limitations, the DEMIG C2C database's unprecedented coverage allowed us to calculate estimates of total emigration *from* accession countries and major non-EU origin countries *towards* the EU based on accumulated immigration statistics from the main destination countries within the EU. The DEMIG C2C database covers data, when available, by country of birth (COB), country of citizenship (COC) and country of residency (COR). In our analyses, we gave preference to COR over the other categories (upon availability), given that this is the most suitable criterion for analysing migration flows, particularly for countries of origin and destination with high migration flow volume, as well as to capture the timing and direction of flows between countries irrespective of nationality/birth (see Vezzoli, Villares-Varela and de Haas 2014 for more detail on the suitability of reporting criteria).

The DEMIG C2C data allowed us to 'reconstruct' annual estimates of EU-bound emigration for countries that do not regularly collect reliable emigration data. For example, while Morocco or Romania do not have reliable emigration registers, we could estimate annual outflows to the EU by summing up immigration from Morocco as reported by EU destination countries. The additional advantage of 'reconstructing' emigration based on immigration records is that immigration data are generally more reliable than emigration data. The latter are often substantially underreported because migrants often lack of incentives for deregistering from population registers or consulate offices upon emigration either out of fear of losing residency status or out of indifference (cf. Vezzoli, Villares-Varela and de Haas 2014).

Our analyses try to grasp the general trends and patterns of European migration dynamics by treating the EU as a single region, rather than a series of individual destination countries. We aggregated data at several levels to acquire estimates of (1) migration between different world regions and the EU; (2) intra-EU migration; (3) migration between accession countries and the previous EU area; and (4) migration from and to important non-EU origin countries. Such estimates can only be obtained through bilateral data, which make it possible to distinguish the geographical origins and destinations (both on the level of individual countries *and* world regions) of immigration and emigration. In this way, we were able to estimate the long-term evolution of the volumes and geographical orientation of immigration and emigration to, from and within the EU.

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<sup>7</sup> Data for the UK is included in some but not **all** the analyses, because UK flow data is not disaggregated by country of origin, residence or nationality. The UK lacks a population register/border register, and flow data are based on travel survey data. Therefore, UK official flow data can be used to assess aggregate inflows/outflows but not for the level of country-level disaggregation required for some of the analyses in this paper.

While the EU is our central unit of analysis, the numbers of countries included in the EU has increased over time. To account for expansion, we assessed migration dynamics around the accession of new countries by referring to migration to and from the *prior* member states. So, for example, the EU9 is the geographical reference unit for measuring the migratory implications of the 1981 accession of Greece and the 1986 accession of Spain and Portugal. The resulting EU12 is the reference unit for analysing the accession of Austria, Finland and Sweden; the resulting EU15 is the reference unit for the 2004 enlargement with predominantly Central and Eastern European countries; and the resulting EU25 is the reference unit for the 2007 accession of Bulgaria and Romania.

Country-specific background information on accession rules and migration policies was drawn from the DEMIG POLICY database, which tracks changes in migration policies of 45 countries between 1946 and 2013 (de Haas, Natter and Vezzoli 2015) and the DEMIG VISA database<sup>8</sup>, which is a global panel of bilateral travel visa requirements for the 1973-2013 period for 214 reporting countries (Czaika, de Haas and Villares-Varela 2018).

## 4 EU enlargement: Internal opening and external closure

In pursuit of a achieving a peaceful Europe after destructive warfare, the current European Union (EU) results from a long process of internal opening and enlargement that started in 1951 when Belgium, Germany, France, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands founded the European Coal and Steel Community, and, subsequently in 1957, the European Economic Community (EEC) and the European Atomic Energy Community. In seven successive accession waves from 1973 to 2013, the EEC, which became the European Union (EU) in 1993, expanded to 28 members. The enlargement process started with the accession of Denmark, Ireland and the UK in 1973. Greece joined the EEC in 1981 and was followed by Spain and Portugal in 1986. Austria, Finland, and Sweden became EU members in 1995. The largest EU expansion came in 2004 when 10 countries—the Czech Republic, Cyprus, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia—joined. Bulgaria and Romania followed in 2007; the most recent addition was Croatia in 2013.<sup>9</sup>

Since the beginning of the EU, fear of immigration has shaped governance around the right to work and live in other member states. In fact, it was not until 1968 that a council regulation gave full rights of free movement and establishment within the EEC for citizens of its members (Belgium, Germany,

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<sup>8</sup> The DEMIG C2C, DEMIG POLICY and DEMIG VISA databases were created as part of the DEMIG (Determinants of International Migration) project, which was carried out at the Oxford University's International Migration Institute (IMI) between 2010 and 2015.

<sup>9</sup> While we are aware of the important changes implied in the transformation of the EEC into the EU, in the interest of consistency in this paper we use 'EU' as shorthand to refer to this regional block since its initial creation in 1951. IMI<sup>W</sup> Working Papers Series 2019, No. 150

France, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands) as well as forbade all forms of labour market discrimination. Worries about potential “massive flows from Italy to the other five founding countries” (Goedings, 1998: 7) explain why it took the EEC many years to establish a free movement zone.<sup>10</sup> For instance, until the 1960s, the Dutch government tried to prevent family members of Italian ‘guestworkers’ to come to the Netherlands and tried to deport family members who resides irregularly in the Netherlands (Bonjour 2011).

Indeed, older EU member states have often imposed temporary immigration restrictions to new members partly to make free movement palatable to the public. In transitional periods that follow accession, citizens of new member states may have to apply for a work permit as stipulated by national laws and regulations of specific EU destination countries; restrictions can last as long as seven years from accession.<sup>11</sup> Therefore, citizens of new member states have frequently lacked the immediate right to live and work in other member states (see Table 1). The granting of full work rights implies that member states can no longer impose any limits on EU citizens’ right to work.

Such immigration fears have been mainly reserved for Southern and Eastern European countries where large gaps in economic development created the fear of mass migration of populations who were also perceived as culturally different from Northern and Western European societies. For example, such fears did not accompany the entry of the UK, Ireland and Denmark, which acquired full rights when joining the EEC; similarly, citizens of Austria, Finland and Sweden faced no mobility or working restrictions from the time of accession in 1995. While Greece joined the EEC in 1981, Greek citizens had to wait until 1988 to acquire full working rights and be protected against labour market discrimination in other member countries. Spain and Portugal joined in 1986, but citizens of both countries faced restricted labour market access until 1991. The 10 countries that joined the EU in 2004, eight of them from the Eastern bloc, were confronted with a mixed situation. The non-Eastern bloc countries, Malta and Cyprus, gained immediate working rights in all EU15. Although the United Kingdom, Ireland and Sweden fully opened their doors to all accession countries, citizens of new member states had to wait until 2006 to gain full mobility rights in Greece, Finland, Iceland, Italy and Spain. Workers from the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovak Republic and Slovenia gained full mobility rights in Luxembourg and the Netherlands in 2007, in France in 2008, in Denmark in 2009, and in Austria and Germany in 2011.

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<sup>10</sup> Post-WWII Italian migration to Western European countries was stimulated by labour recruitment programmes such as those with France in 1946, Switzerland in 1948 and Germany in 1955. However, Italian labour had been recruited as early as 1919 by France and 1939 by Germany (see DEMIG POLICY).

<sup>11</sup> Enlargement – transition provisions, available at <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=466&langId=en>, accessed on May 23, 2017.

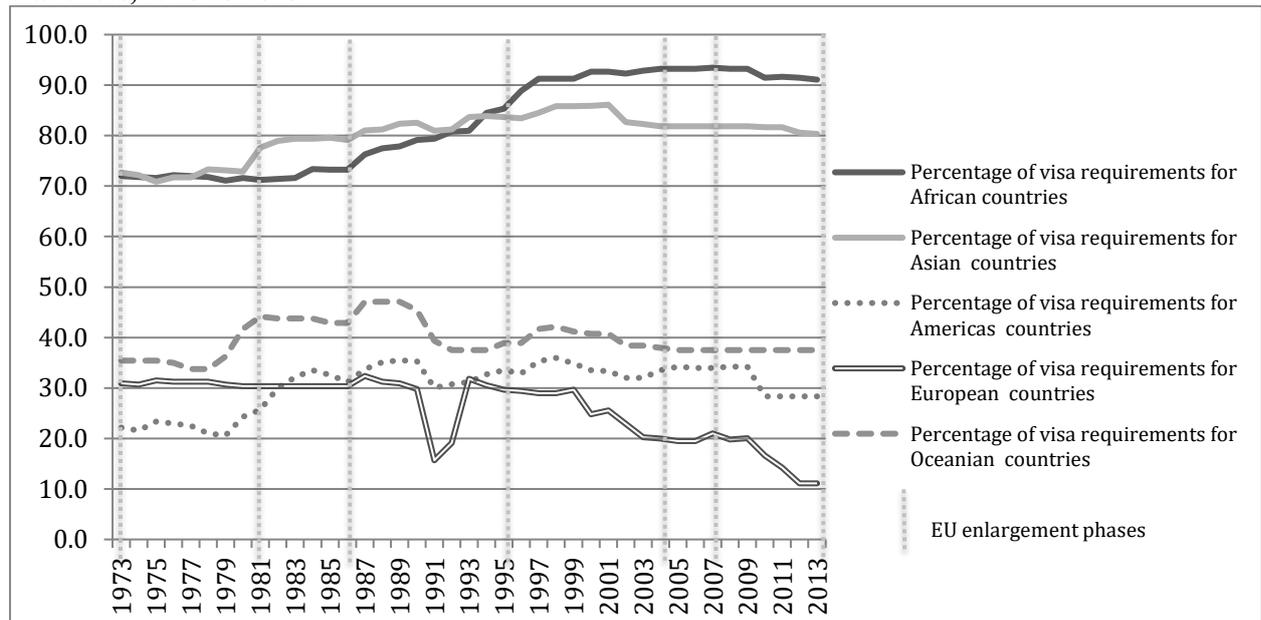
Upon joining the EU in 2007, citizens from Bulgaria and Romania also encountered a mix of openness and restriction. They gained immediate, full work rights in Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Sweden, but they had to wait until 2009 to gain free access to the labour markets of Denmark, Greece, Hungary, Portugal and Spain; until 2012 to Ireland, Italy and Norway; and until 2014 to Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Spain and the UK. The 2013 accession of Croatia followed the same patterns with a gradual removal of labour restrictions: while the 2004 enlargement countries welcomed Croatian citizens immediately, Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Spain gave labour market access in 2015.

**Table 1. EU member states' year of accession and right to work**

<b>Accession countries</b>	<b>Abbreviation</b>	<b>Accession (year)</b>	<b>Working rights (year)</b>
<b>Belgium, Germany, France, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands</b>	EU6	1951, 1957	1968
<b>Denmark, Ireland and UK</b>	EU9	1973	1973
<b>Greece</b>	EU10	1981	1988
<b>Spain and Portugal</b>	EU12	1986	1991
<b>Austria, Finland, Sweden</b>	EU15	1995	1995
<b>Cyprus, Malta</b>	EU25	2004	2004: Malta and Cyprus gained immediate working rights in all EU15
<b>Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia</b>			2004: Ireland, Sweden, UK 2006: Finland, Greece, Iceland, Italy, Norway, Spain 2007: Luxembourg, the Netherlands 2008: France 2009: Denmark 2011: Austria, Germany
<b>Bulgaria and Romania</b>	EU27	2007	2007: Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, Sweden 2009: Denmark, Greece, Hungary, Portugal, Spain 2012: Ireland, Italy, Norway 2014: Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Spain, UK
<b>Croatia</b>	EU28	2013	2013: Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia 2015: Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Spain 2018: UK

In addition to facilitating internal migration, European countries made it easier for people to travel within much of Europe thanks to the creation of the Schengen zone in 1995. The Schengen area largely, but not entirely, overlaps with the EU zone.<sup>12</sup> Yet Schengen happened at about the same time that travel visa regimes were imposed on important origin countries in North Africa and the Middle East (including Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria and Turkey) and elsewhere (including the Dominican Republic and Ecuador). Figure 1 shows the percentage of countries within each world region that need a travel visa to enter EU9 countries. Requiring travel visas exemplifies how growing intra-European mobility liberalisation coincided with increasing visa restrictions towards Asian and, particularly, African countries. Furthermore, the EU12 countries have not imposed any travel visas upon each other in the post-World War II period, and since the fall of the Berlin Wall, they have gradually removed travel restrictions for countries in Central and Eastern Europe (CCE) well before they joined the EU. Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland saw their travel restrictions removed in the early 1990s; Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania in 2000; Bulgaria in 2002 and Romania in 2003.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, internal opening coincided with increased external closure of border regimes.

**Figure 1. Percentage of countries requiring a visa to enter EU9 by continent of origin of the travellers, 1973 to 2013**



Source: DEMIG VISA Database, International Migration Institute, University of Oxford

<sup>12</sup> The Schengen Area includes all: (i) EU member states except Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Ireland, Romania and the United Kingdom; and (ii) the non-EU states of Iceland, Norway, Switzerland and Liechtenstein.

<sup>13</sup> The United Kingdom and Ireland, which are not part of the Schengen Zone, lifted travel visa restrictions for Bulgarian and Romanian citizens in 2008.

## 5 The emergence of Europe as a global migration destination

To properly contextualise the analyses we will present later, it is important to understand the rather drastic change of Europe's position on the global migration map. Ever since the 'discovery' of the Americas, Europe has been a continent of emigrants who ventured out all around the world to occupy foreign territories as conquistadores, colonists and migrant settlers. Historical evidence shows that, in addition to out-of-Europe emigration, Europe has known significant intra-continental migration over the past five centuries (Lucassen and Lucassen 2009). Yet immigration from the colonies to Europe, both of 'colonial subjects' and returning colonists, soldiers and migrants, remained relatively modest and often circular. These patterns have fundamentally changed since World War II. While decolonization led to significant migration from former colonies around their independence, unprecedented economic growth, increasing female labour participation and declining birth rates led to greater demand for migrant workers in factories, mines, shipyards, agriculture, catering and other services in North-Western European countries. In the 1950s and 1960s, migrants were recruited from European 'periphery' countries, such as Ireland, Finland, Spain, Portugal, (southern) Italy, the former Yugoslavia and Greece. While migration from Ireland and Finland was primarily directed at the industrial heartlands of the UK and Sweden, respectively, labour migration to Germany, Austria, France, the Netherlands, Belgium and Denmark mainly originated from countries in the Mediterranean region. Scholars and politicians refer to these labour migration agreements as guest worker programs, because many assumed the workers would return home when their labour was no longer needed.

Over the course of the 1960s and early 1970s, labour supplies dwindled due to economic growth and demographic change in North-Western Europe. At the same time, the emigration potential of Southern European countries such as Portugal, Spain, Italy and the former Yugoslavia was rapidly decreasing. This encouraged recruitment and labour migration from Turkey, the Maghreb countries of Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia, as well as countries further afield, often former colonies such as Senegal and Mali (to France) and Pakistan, Bangladesh and the Caribbean (to the UK). The 1973 Oil Embargo<sup>14</sup> heralded a period of economic recession and led to countries ending worker recruitment. However, migration to North-Western Europe continued during the late 1970s and 1980s, largely because many 'guest workers' decided to settle and bring over their wives and children. From the mid-1980s, the former emigration countries of Southern Europe, particularly Italy and Spain, emerged as new destination countries for labour migrants from the Maghreb and Latin America (mainly to Spain).

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<sup>14</sup> The 1973 Oil Embargo is more commonly referred to as the Oil Crisis. However, this was a crisis from a EU-North American perspective, but a boon for oil-producing countries. Thus, embargo introduces a more neutral term.

Increasing migration to Southern Europe was driven by a combination of economic growth, economic restructuring and informality, increasing education and female labour participation, and rapid fertility decline and population ageing (King 1993; King and Zontini 2000). Together, these factors generated demand for (often informal) migrant labour in sectors such as agriculture, elderly care, domestic work, catering and construction.

The fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989 heralded the progressive eastward expansion of an increasingly integrated European migration system. While the lifting of exit restrictions and the opening of the Berlin Wall led to an immediate, largely temporary, surge in East-West migration, it also led to worries in Western Europe of massive migration from Eastern Europe. Reinforcing these fears in the early 1990s were refugee flows resulting from wars in the former Yugoslavia, which led to a large temporary influx of asylum seekers, particularly from Bosnia to Germany and other North-Western European countries. Meanwhile, the creation of the Schengen zone in 1995 led to common visa rules. This coincided with European countries introducing Schengen visas for citizens of North African countries as well as Turkey in 1990 and 1991. However, Schengen visas did not curb migration from outside the EU. Labour demand continued to fuel labour migration through formal and informal channels, while family reunification facilitated legal migration despite restrictive immigration regimes. These immigration restrictions also interrupted circulation migration, thereby encouraging migrants to settle permanently. Due to this combination of factors, the permanent presence of non-European migrant populations in EU countries solidified.

The DEMIG C2C data enables us to analyse the evolution of external migration to the European Union.<sup>15</sup> Using the current EU25 countries as a time-invariant reference group, Figure 2 estimates total migration to the EU between 1960 and 2009, and compares it to permanent immigration into the US. The EU25 figures include immigration from non-EU25 European countries, such as Albania, Macedonia, Serbia, Kosovo, Moldova, Russia, Ukraine and other former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) states. With a few exceptions<sup>16</sup>, these data do not include unauthorized migration, which leads to an underestimation of migration figures, particularly to the United States. For instance, the peak in US immigration in the early 1990s reflects the massive regularisation of Mexican and other unauthorized migrants following the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA).

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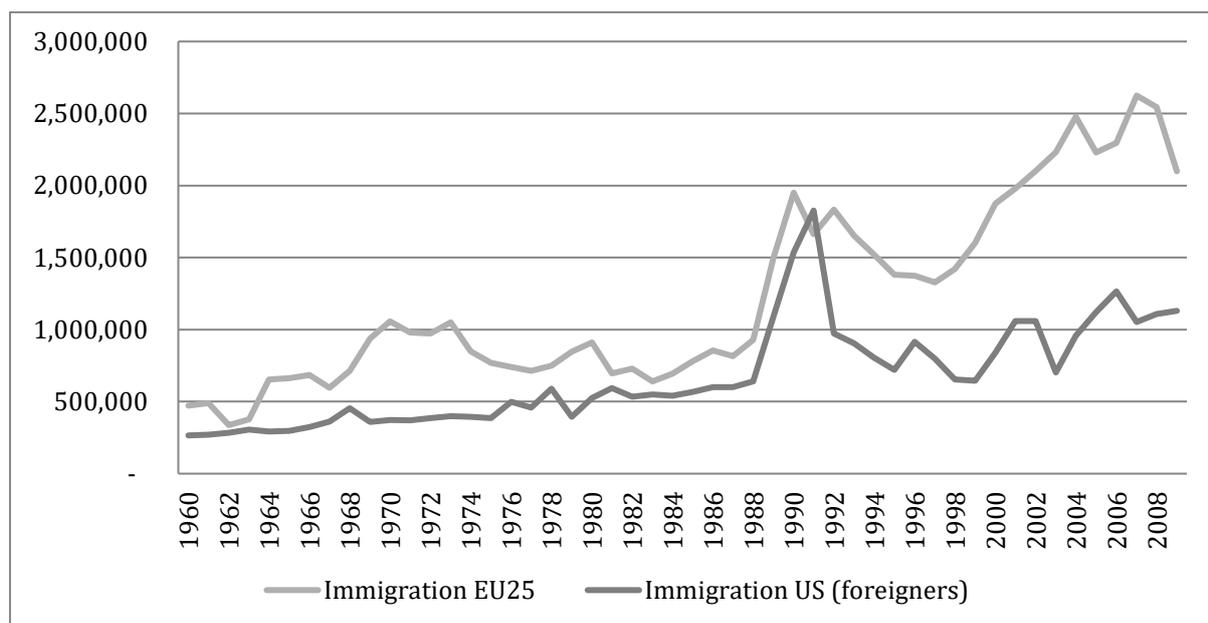
<sup>15</sup> Figures in this paper refer to different EU reference groups (EU9, EU12, EU15, EU25) according to the specific phases of enlargement for which we analyse change. Moreover, because DEMIG C2C data rely on published national migration statistics (no estimates) which have different degrees of completeness over time, each figures covers the year spans for which there is the best country coverage.

<sup>16</sup> One of the exceptions is Spain, where unauthorised migrants can register at the municipality and are included in immigration statistics.

Figure 2 shows that non-EU25 immigration has increased over the last two decades, notwithstanding the policy focus on external closure to limit the entry of non-EU migrants. It also shows that the EU25 area has attracted more immigrants than the US in absolute numbers. However, this discrepancy may be reduced once unauthorized migration is taken into account, particularly when we consider new estimates of unauthorized migration in the US. These estimates, which are based on standard demographic principles of adding inflows and deducting outflows from a date-specific population size, suggest the number of unauthorised migrants may be as high as double that of conventional estimates (Fazel-Zarandi, Feinstein and Kaplan 2018).

The surge in migration to the EU25 around 1990 largely reflects migration from the former Communist East Bloc, including ethnic Germans (*Aussiedler*) from the former Soviet Union to Germany around the fall of the Berlin Wall and refugee migration associated with the wars in the former Yugoslavia.

**Figure 2. Migration to the US and the EU25 between 1960 and 2009, based on official data<sup>17</sup>**

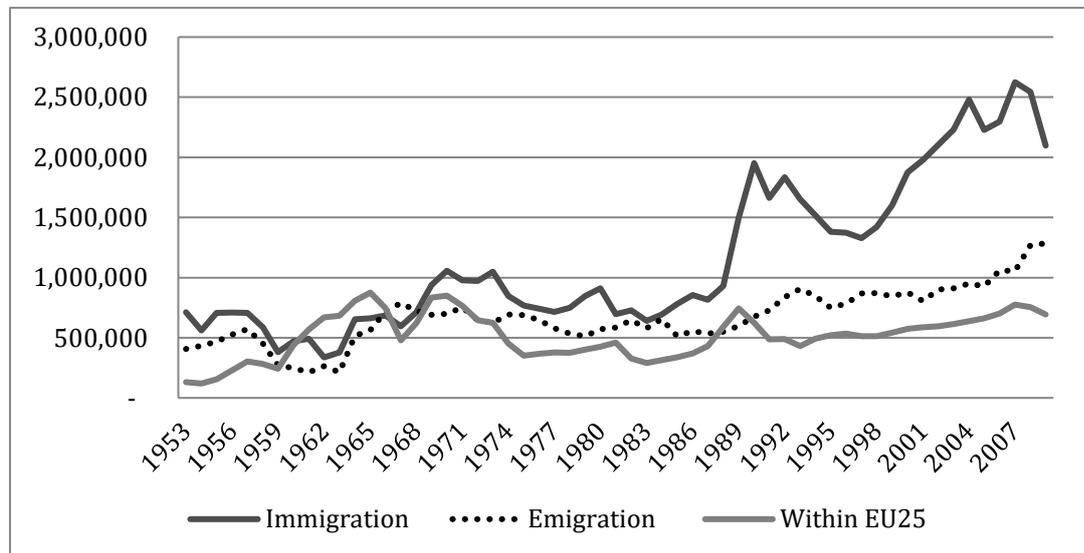


Source: DEMIG C2C database, International Migration Institute, University of Oxford.

<sup>17</sup> The data include the following reporting countries: Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and the UK. Data reported by COR for both citizens and foreigners for Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and the UK. Data reported by COC for foreigners for France, Greece, Hungary and Portugal. Since we do not have data for Ireland, Cyprus, Malta, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, the data actually represent 19 countries. Data on the US is on permanent immigration. Inclusion of temporary immigrants would bring annual inflows up to about 2 million per year over the 2000s.

To analyse immigration and emigration from and to the EU simultaneously, Figure 3 shows annual migration from ‘third countries’ to the current EU25 area from non-EU25 countries and *vice versa*, and compares it with the sum of all registered migration movements *within* the EU25 area. Although this approach is likely to underestimate intra-EU25 migration to some extent (because not all migrants register at the destination) as well as migration from the EU25 (not all emigrants de-register), the data reveal clear trends. First, migration from non-EU25 countries to the EU25 has structurally increased. Second, intra-European migration has remained remarkably stable. There have been clear spikes in intra-EU25 migration, such as during the 1960s ‘guest worker’ era and after the fall of the Berlin Wall, and numbers have slowly grown since 1997. However, the long-term picture shows a steady trend, particularly if we compare intra-EU25 migration with the increasing migration towards the EU25. This defies policymakers’ expectations that intra-EU mobility would lead to a decrease of migration from ‘third countries’.

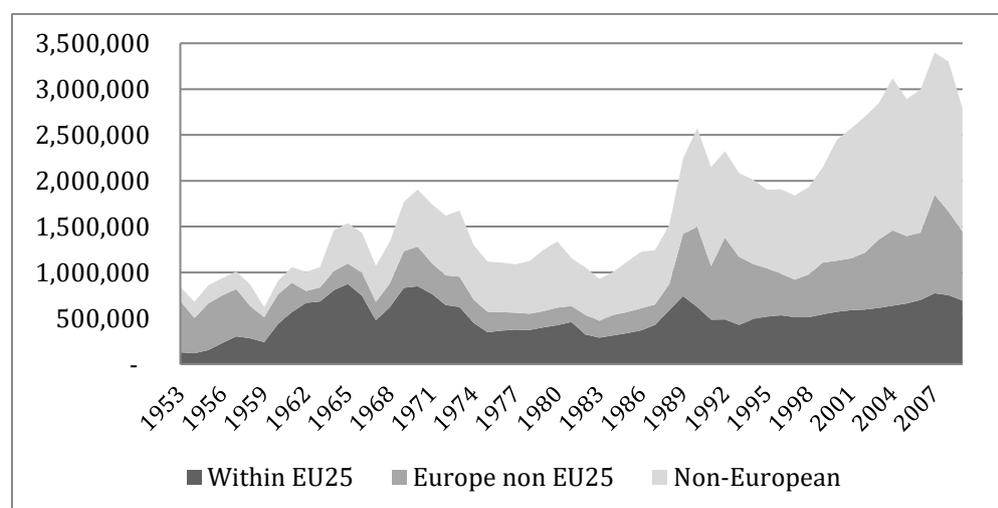
**Figure 3. Migration from and to the EU25 and intra-EU25 migration, 1953 to 2009**



Source: DEMIG C2C database, International Migration Institute, University of Oxford.

However, these aggregate figures conceal significant shifts in the prevailing geographical direction of intra-European migration. While South-North movements dominated until the 1970s, East-West migration became the main type beginning in the late 1980s. If we disaggregate immigration to the EU25 by origin (see Figure 4), we see that non-EU25 European countries dominated migration to the current EU25 zones in the 1950s. This was followed by a period where migration from Southern Europe began to dominate migration within the EU25. After the 1970s, however, countries outside the current EU25, such as Turkey, Morocco and Tunisia, became EU25 immigration leaders. What we also see is that since 1989-1991, immigration from non-EU25 European countries has grown, reflecting increasing migration from countries such as Romania, Bulgaria (who would access the EU in 2017), Moldova, Ukraine and Russia.

**Figure 4. Origins of migration to EU25 countries, 1953 to 2009**



Source: DEMIG C2C database, International Migration Institute, University of Oxford.

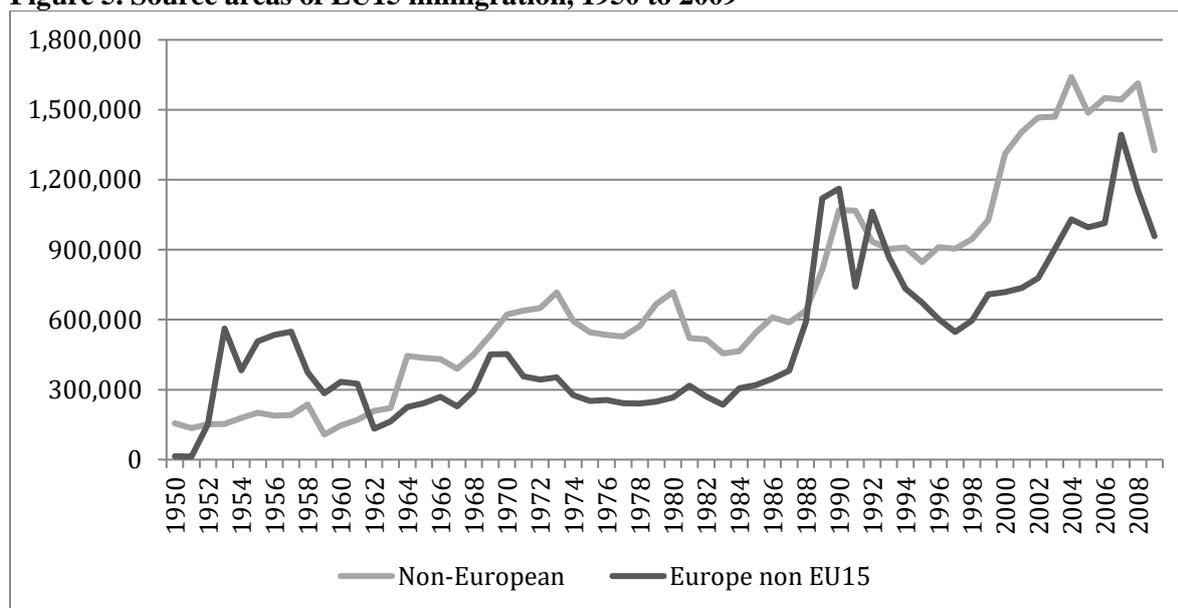
To gain more insights into the geographical origins of intra-EU25 migration, further analyses use the EU15 as the standard reference group. This is the Western European core group of EU countries before the 2004 enlargement and the main destinations of migrants from non-European countries as well as new member states. An additional reason for focusing on the EU15 in further analyses is that this group of countries has the best longitudinal coverage of bilateral migration flows in the DEMIG C2C database.

Figure 5 disaggregates EU15 immigration from non-European and non-EU15 European origin countries<sup>18</sup>. It shows that immigration levels from non-European and European sources are strongly correlated. In fact, the correlation ratio for both types of immigration levels between is 0.83 for the 1945-2011 time period. Figure 5 also shows that non-European immigration sources have become more important since the mid-1960s, with the exception of the period around the fall of the Berlin Wall and the wars in the former Yugoslavia, which caused temporary spikes in labour and asylum migration. This seems to suggest that migration from European and non-European countries is driven by similar forces, particularly labour demand and business cycles in destination countries. The data further questions the past policy expectations that increasing intra-European migration and mobility would diminish the demand for non-EU migrants. However, it can be difficult to disentangle economic causes of trends and fluctuations in migration from the effects of political transformations

<sup>18</sup> 'Non-EU15 European origin countries' include the additional EU13 member states plus Albania, Andorra, Belarus, Bosnia Herzegovina, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Macedonia, Moldova, Monaco, Montenegro, Norway, Russia, Serbia, Switzerland, St. Marino, Ukraine, and the former Yugoslavia.

and concomitant changes in migration policies. For instance, the period between 1988 and 2001, during which the initial East-West migration surge occurred, was also one of high economic growth in most Western European destination countries. The same applies to the years preceding 2007, exactly around the 2004 EU accession of 10 countries, eight of them from the Eastern bloc. Therefore, there closely intertwined economic and political factors have probably reinforced each other, explaining migration surges around these years.

**Figure 5. Source areas of EU15 immigration, 1950 to 2009**



Source: DEMIG C2C database, International Migration Institute, University of Oxford.

To further investigate the regional origins of non-European migration, Figure 6 disaggregates immigration from the former USSR and non-European countries by origin regions. Consistent with other analyses, the data show that the fall of the Berlin wall led to a temporary surge of migration from the disintegrating USSR. Figure 6 also shows that, until the late 1980s, immigration from ‘third countries’ was dominated by Asia and Africa, reflecting labour and family migration from Turkey and the Maghreb. The peaks in migration from Asia in 1973 and 1980 primarily come from Turkish migration, which accounted for about 31 percent of all migration from Asia to the EU15 in the 1945-2011 period<sup>19</sup>. Since the 1990s, as Turkish emigration decreased, other countries have taken over Turkey’s position such as Bangladesh, India and Sri Lanka towards the UK, China to all EU15 countries; and Kazakhstan to Germany (mainly *Aussiedler*) (source: background analysis of DEMIG C2C data). Figure 6 also shows that African migration to the EU has been increasing. Until 1990, this mainly represented migration from the Maghreb countries. Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia accounted

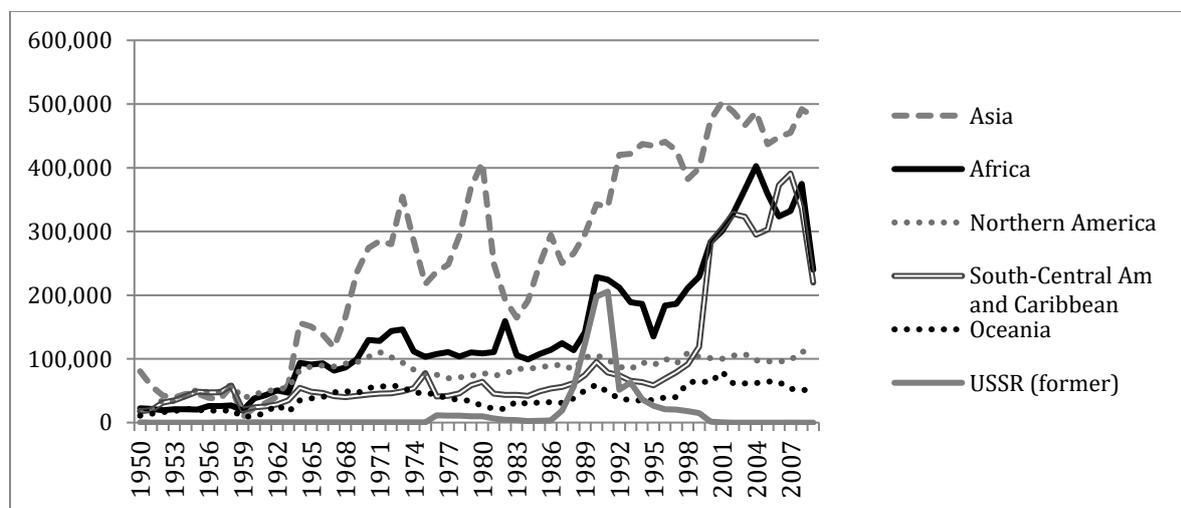
<sup>19</sup> We are aware that Turkey straddles the ‘divide’ between Europe and Asia, and that from a historical point of view there also arguments for including Turkey into ‘Europe’. In addition, Turkey is an EU accession state. This reflects that such regional division are often artificial to a certain extent. However, for reasons of statistical convenience we have followed the official UN classification of Turkey as part of Asia.

for over 50 percent of all African immigration to the EU15 in the 1945-2011 period. In recent years, the share of migrants from sub-Saharan Africa, particularly from West Africa, has grown (Flahaux and De Haas 2016).

Since 2000, registered migration from South and Central America and the Caribbean region has risen sharply. Migrants from countries such as Ecuador, Bolivia and Colombia moved to Spain and, to some extent, Italy, and from Brazil to various EU countries, mainly Portugal, Spain, Germany and Italy. Labour demand in Southern Europe, where informal economies are significant, drove these flows. While Latin Americans with Southern European ancestry could easily obtain citizenship and migrate freely, many Latin Americans migrated without work authorisation and later obtained residence papers as part of various regularization campaigns.

Finally, figure 6 shows an increase in migration from North America during the 1960s that stabilised at relatively modest levels. A similar pattern can be detected, albeit at lower levels, for migration from Australia and New Zealand (Oceania). This partly reflects the return of European emigrants, but also immigration from native born Americans, Canadians, Australians and New Zealanders to Europe.

**Figure 6. Non-European migration to EU15, annual flows, by region of origin, 1950 to 2009<sup>20</sup>**



Source: DEMIG C2C database, International Migration Institute, University of Oxford.

To understand underlying migration dynamics, and particularly to analyse the degree to which Europe-bound migration has been matched by reverse (return) flows, Figures 7.1-7.4 investigate migration between the EU15 and different world regions in either direction. Figure 7.1 shows the last

<sup>20</sup> 'USSR' refers to migrants who registered with USSR passports or declared that their former country of citizenship or residence was the USSR. This explains that this figure did not immediately drop to zero after the dissolution of the USSR in 1991. In later calculations, the Baltic states, Belarus, Moldova, Ukraine and Russia have been included in the European aggregates, and other Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS -Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan) have been included in the Asian aggregates.

two US- and Canada-bound emigration peaks from EU15 countries in the 1950s (partly from war-torn countries such as the UK, Germany and the Netherlands) and the late 1960s (mainly from Italy), which were followed by significant return movements. Since the mid-1970s, migration flows to and from North America have generally balanced each other out. Europe-bound movements include return migration of European emigrants and, increasingly, immigration of North American citizens.

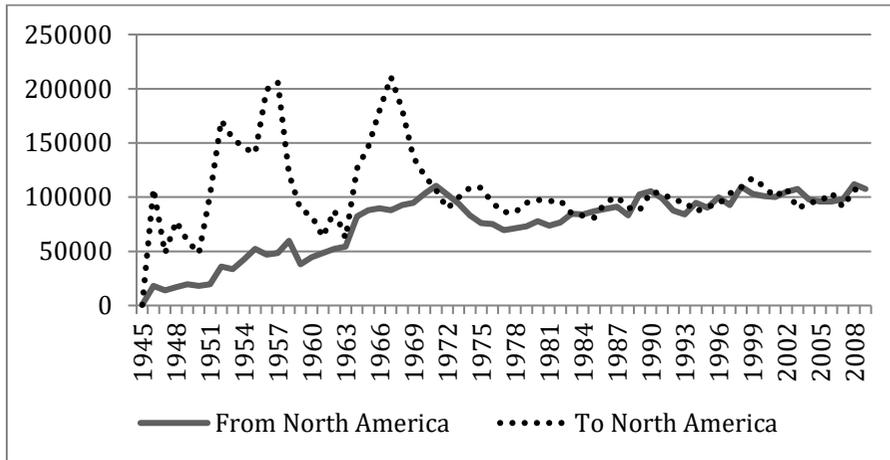
Figure 7.2 shows that Turkish and other Asian migrations to the EU have been mirrored with significant migration in the reverse direction, due largely to significant return migration. In fact, immigration peaks from Asia are consistently followed by significant return migration; background analyses showed that the correlation ratio between immigration and emigration levels is 0.79. Since the 1980s, the gap between immigration and emigration from and to Asia has been widening, with immigration to the EU15 on average exceeding emigration by at least two times. This may indicate a trend towards long-term settlement and lower levels of circulation, possibly related to increasing visa and other immigration restrictions. A growing gap between immigration and emigration (mainly reflecting return) is even starker for migration from and to Africa (Figure 7.3) and South-Central America and the Caribbean (Figure 7.4)<sup>21</sup>, where the immigration/emigration ratio rose to levels of above 5 between 2000 and 2011. This could be a first indication that visa requirements and immigration restrictions have discouraged returns and thus interrupted circulation.

Registered immigration levels from Africa seem to follow European business cycles with migration peaking around 1990 and in the mid-2000s. These peaks reflect migration from the Maghreb countries, and especially Morocco, to the booming Spanish economy, but also from other African regions, particularly West Africa to Spain and Italy. Latin American migration to Europe surged during the mid-2000s mainly due to Spain's rapid economic growth and Spanish migration policies that encouraged Latin American migration over North African migration. A stimulating factor may have been the absence of Schengen visa requirements for several Latin American nationalities, including Brazilians and Ecuadorians, as well as a higher openness in post-entry rights (Izquierdo-Escribano et al., 2003). Many Latin American migrants, such as those from Peru and Ecuador, have unauthorised status because they overstay tourist visas of the maximum duration of stay for visitors.

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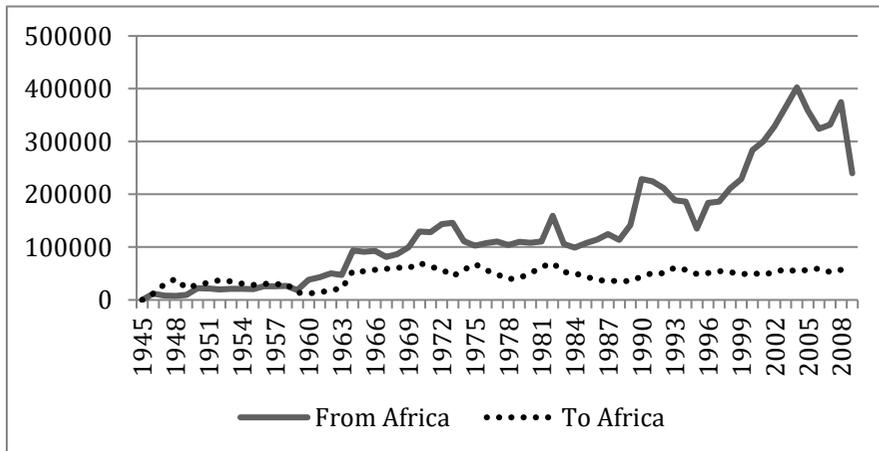
<sup>21</sup> The left tail of figure 7.4 shows the end of the great European migrations to South American countries such as Argentina, Brazil and Venezuela.

**Figure 7.1. North American migration to and from the EU15, 1945 to 2009**



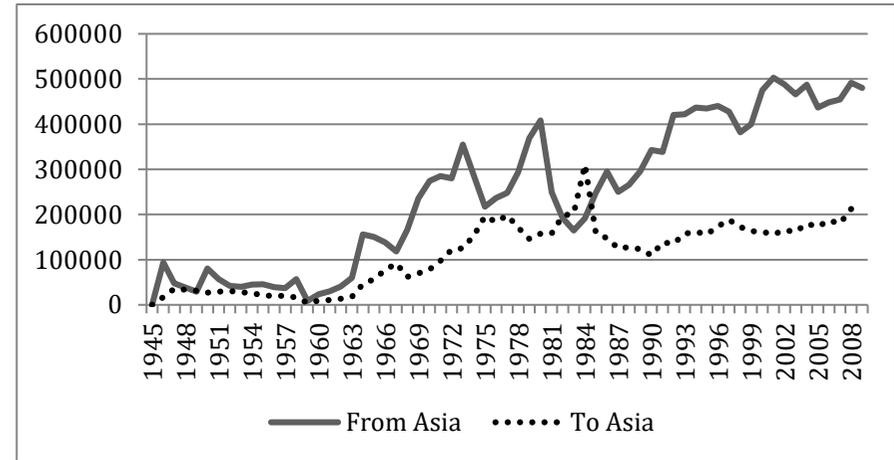
Source: DEMIG C2C database, International Migration Institute, University of Oxford.

**Figure 7.3. African migration to and from the EU15, 1945 to 2009**



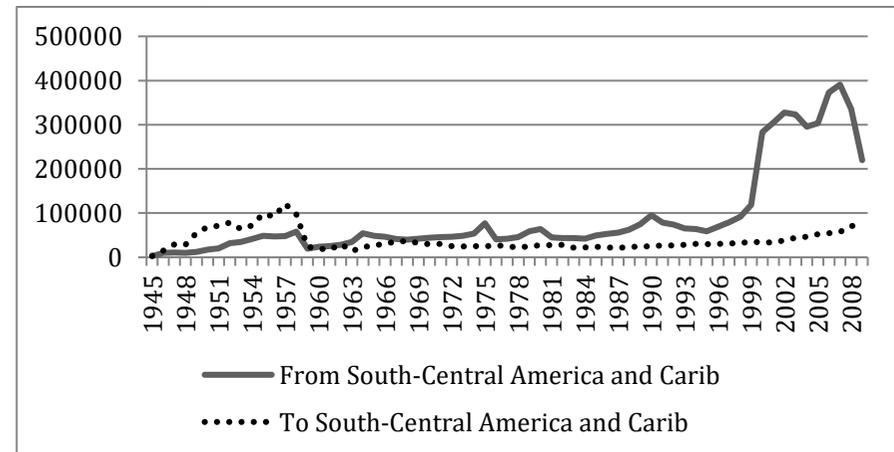
Source: DEMIG C2C database, International Migration Institute, University of Oxford.

**Figure 7.2. Asian migration to and from the EU15, 1945 to 2009**



Source: DEMIG C2C database, International Migration Institute, University of Oxford.

**Figure 7.4. South-Central American-Caribbean migration to and from the EU15, 1945 to 2009**



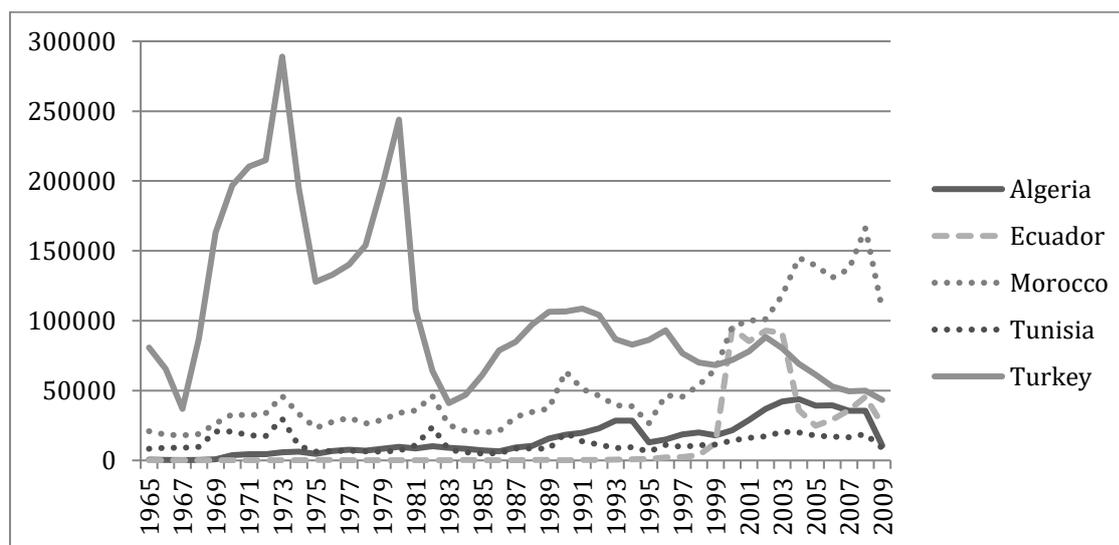
Source: DEMIG C2C database, International Migration Institute, University of Oxford.

Emigration data are generally less accurate than immigration data because of frequent under-registration. Non-European citizens faced with immigration restrictions may be less likely to de-register because doing so may imperil their residency rights and, hence, their ability to re-enter. Yet the gap between immigration and emigration for both Asian and African countries is so large and consistent that there can be little doubt that, to a large degree, they are choosing to stay. This finding aligns with a growing body of empirical evidence (see Czaika and De Haas 2006) that visa and other immigration restrictions tend to interrupt circulation and push migrants into permanent settlement; in the absence of permitted remigration, they often prefer to stay on the safe side of the border.

The overall trend of increased non-European immigration occurred in a policy context that aimed to favour legal immigration of high-skilled migrants while restricting entry for lower-skilled migrants and (potential) asylum seekers as well as their families; policymakers generally deployed visa requirements and residence and work permits to restrict unwanted flows. To further understand how visa and other immigration restrictions have affected immigration from important non-EU origin countries, Figure 8 depicts the evolution of migration from Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Turkey and Ecuador. For all five countries, immigration restrictions have increased, particularly since the introduction of Schengen-wide visa requirements in the mid- 1990s. With the notable exception of Turkey, the graph shows that the ‘closure’ of external EU borders has coincided with a structural increase—instead of a decrease—of migration to Europe since the ‘guest worker’ migration boom of the 1960s and 1970s. While diminishing Turkish flows over the 2000s seem primarily linked to Turkey’s strong economic growth and political stability in this period, migration from other non-European countries to Europe continued or increased.

The sudden peak in immigration from Ecuador in the 1999-2003 period reflects a political and economic crisis in Ecuador that coincided with changing policies in the US, Ecuadorians’ previous primary destination. US border policies made clandestine migration more expensive and dangerous, leading Ecuadorian migrants to seek out alternative destinations. Most Ecuadorian migration to the EU15 was directed to Spain and to a lesser extent to France, Italy and the Netherlands (Jokisch and Pribilsky 2002).

**Figure 8. Inflows towards EU15 from main countries of origin, 1965 to 2009**



Source: DEMIG C2C Database, International Migration Institute, University of Oxford.

## 6 Pre- and post-accession migration patterns

To further explore the role of border and immigration regimes in shaping the European migration patterns presented in the previous section, we now analyse trends and patterns of migration of individual countries prior, during and after their accession to the European free mobility space.

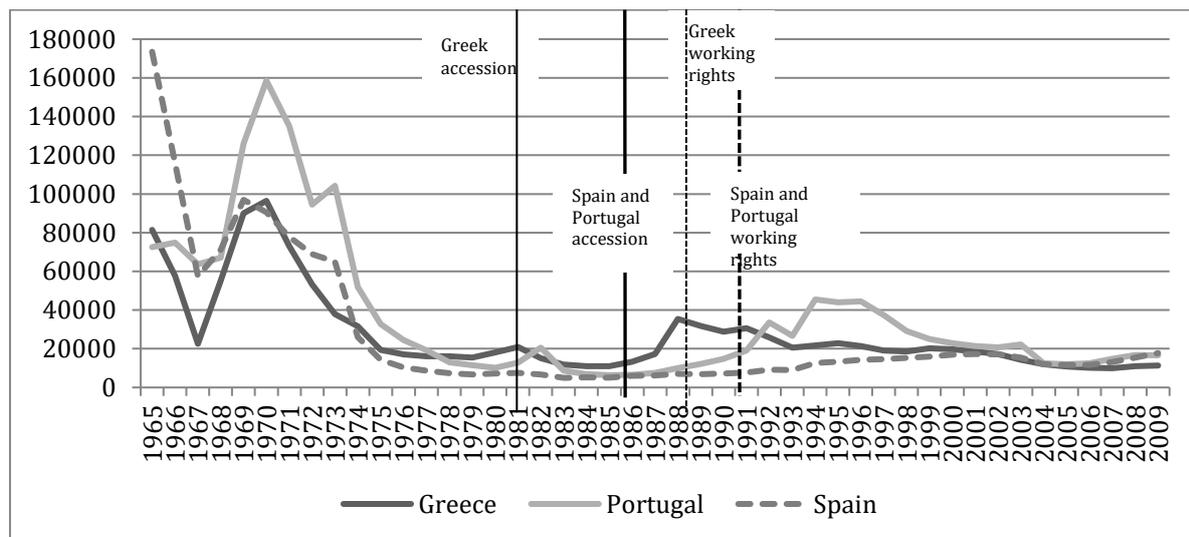
### 6.1 *The Southern European accessions: Greece, Portugal and Spain*

Apart from Italy—which was a full member of the EU since its founding—Spain, Portugal and Greece were major source countries of labour migrants for North-West European countries in the post-World War II decades (see Figure 9). Emigration plummeted in the late 1970s and never recovered to previous levels, largely due to improved living conditions in these countries. The accession to the EU corresponded to a small increase in migration from Greece to the EU9 (in 1981), an increase in Portuguese migration to the EU9<sup>22</sup> in 1986, but no notable increase in migration from Spain in 1986. Migration from Greece to the EU9 increased in 1988, when Greeks were able to access all EU9 labour markets, but migration from Greece began to decrease immediately thereafter. Portuguese migration also grew more rapidly once Portuguese citizens were given access to all EU labour markets in 1991, and continued to increase until the mid-1990s. Conversely, Spanish migration was largely unaffected by the opening of EU9 labour markets in 1991. Spain’s stronger economic growth compared to Portugal, where income levels were substantially lower, seems to explain the

<sup>22</sup> We use the EU9 as a reference group for Portugal and Spain, although by their accession the EU had 10 Member States, because adding Greece to the reference group (i.e. EU10) did not alter the migration flows depicted in Figure 9.

difference. In fact, Spanish migration had already subsided by the 1970s, and EU accession did not affect it. For all three countries, post-accession migration flows were relatively small compared to pre-1973 migration levels, which were driven by work opportunities in Western Europe as well as a lack of opportunities and possibly also political oppression in origin countries.<sup>23</sup> In other words, Greece, Portugal and Spain had already largely gone through their migration transitions, transforming them from countries of net emigration to net immigration, and the accession process only marginally affected their transitions.

**Figure 9. Migration to EU9 countries from Greece, Portugal and Spain, 1965 to 2009**



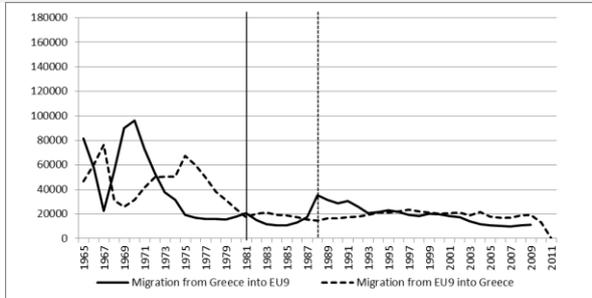
Source: DEMIG C2C Database, International Migration Institute, University of Oxford.

For insights into the effects of EU accession on circulation, Figure 10 differentiates bidirectional migration flows between Greece, Portugal and Spain towards the EU9 countries as well as other European countries. The data for Greece show that, until 1981, periods of net emigration were followed by periods of net immigration. This pattern seems to largely reflect circular migration in response to economic conditions in Western Europe, after which many migrants returned. For instance, the 1973 Oil Embargo triggered substantial return migration and a decrease in emigration. While EU accession in 1981 seemed to have little effect on migration, there was a marked increase in emigration when Greeks acquired fully access to EU9 labour markets in 1988 (see Figure 10a). Since 1993, levels of emigration and immigration have stabilised at relatively low levels that are similar to emigration levels of the late 1970s. Migration between Greece and the rest of (non-EU) Europe has remained low and stable since the mid-1970s, with decreasing emigration to the rest of Europe and slightly increasing immigration (see Figure 10b).

<sup>23</sup> These three countries share which went from 1967 to 1974 in Greece, from 1932 to 1974 for Portugal and from 1936 to 1975 for Spain.

**Figure 10. Migration from Greece, Portugal and Spain to EU9 and rest of Europe, 1965 to 2009**

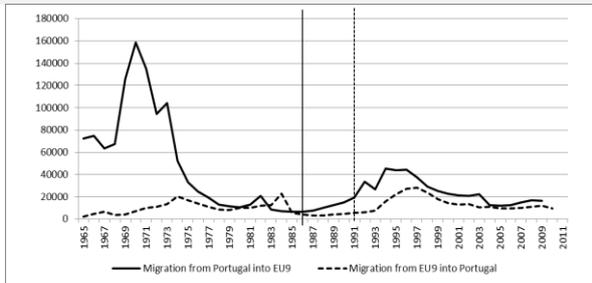
**a) Migration between Greece and EU9**



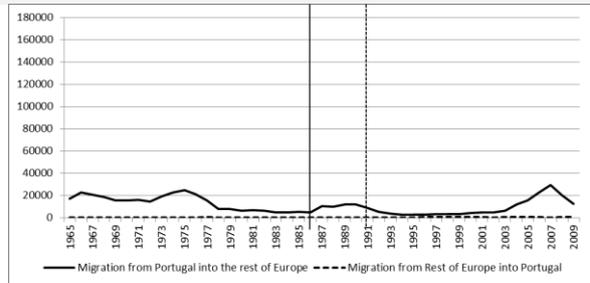
**b) Migration between Greece and non-EU9 European countries**



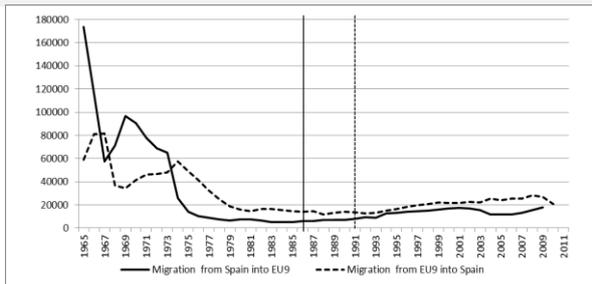
**c) Migration between Portugal and EU9**



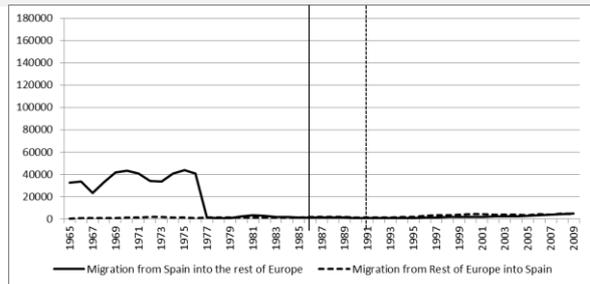
**d) Migration between Portugal and non-EU9 European countries**



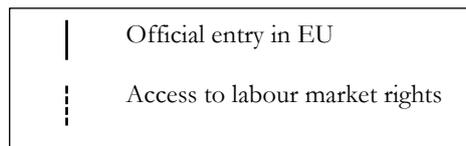
**e) Migration between Spain and EU9**



**f) Migration between Spain and non-EU9 European countries**



**Legend:**



Source: DEMIG C2C Database, International Migration Institute, University of Oxford.

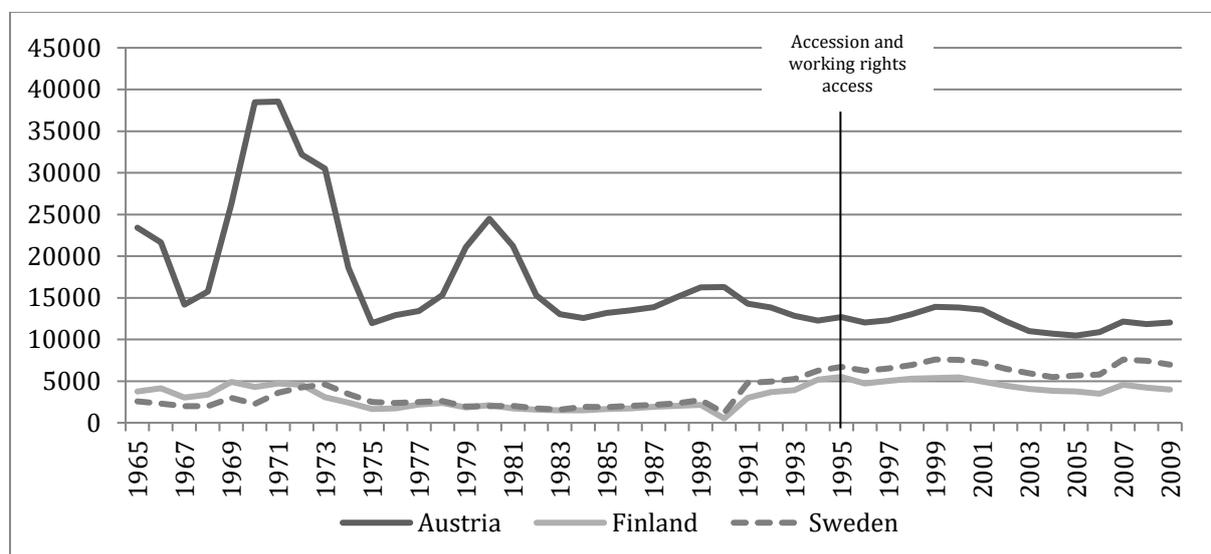
There was a slowdown in migration from Portugal in the late 1970s and early 1980s (see Figure 10c), when North-West European destination countries went through a period of recession and high unemployment. However, from the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s, emigration gradually increased. This resumption of migration coincided with EU accession in 1986, while there was also a slight increase in emigration to other European countries (see Figure 10d). For both Greece and Portugal, after an initial increase, emigration levels to the EU9 readjusted to pre-accession levels within about 15-20 years. In contrast, Spain's net migration with the EU9 has been positive since the mid-1970s, implying that Spain received more people from the EU9 than people leaving (see Figure 10e). Spain's positive net migration includes Spanish emigrants returning as well as the settling of EU9 nationals, many of them retirees seeking a better climate and lower cost of living (Rodríguez, Díaz and Huber 2005). Migration between Spain and non-EU9 countries has been negligible since the late 1970s (see Figure 10f).

As the data show, fears of Southern Europeans 'invading' the European Common Market never translated into large-scale immigration (see also Goedings 1998). Several factors seem to explain why such mass migration did not occur. First, no significant barriers to mobility existed prior to the formal introduction of free migration regimes. We can therefore question to what extent the 1986 enlargements really signified a major change in migration policies for Spain and Portugal (Goedings 1998). In the same period, these origin-country governments pursued policies that sought to encourage return migration, although one may question the influence these policies really had (DEMIG POLICY database, 2014; Goedings, 1998). More important are structural-economic explanations: the decreasing demand for migrant labour in recession-hit Western Europe, economic growth in Southern Europe, and significantly declining opportunity and income gaps between Southern and Western European countries. For instance, the Western-Southern gaps upon accession were much smaller than those between Western Europe and the Central and Eastern European accession states in the 2000s (cf. Elsner and Zimmerman 2013). Moreover, by the 1975 Portugal and Spain had reached low fertility rates reflecting these countries' demographic transition. It seems Southern European emigration to Western Europe peaked in the 1960s and return flows were rising when these countries became EU members and gained full mobility rights. Spain and, to some extent, Greece and Portugal, were already transforming from net emigration into net immigration countries. Therefore, liberalised border regimes linked to EU accession only had a minor effect.

## 6.2 The 1995 accessions: Austria, Finland and Sweden

The 1995 accession of Austria, Finland and Sweden to the EU seems to have had only small, if any observable effects on migration (see Figure 11). Compared to migration from Spain, Portugal and Greece, the overall magnitude of migration between Austria, Finland and Sweden and the EU has remained relatively small. While the volume of migration between Greece, Portugal and Spain and the EU9 amounted to 20,000 to 45,000 people per year, migration between Austria, Finland and Sweden and the EU remained at a few thousand per year. Both the negligible effect of EU accession and the low migration volumes seemed were due to high levels of economic development these three countries achieved prior to EU accession. Also, Sweden and Austria previously had recruited migrant workers from countries such as Turkey (both) and Finland (Sweden).

**Figure 11. Migration to EU12 countries from Austria, Finland and Sweden 1965 to 2009**



Source: DEMIG C2C Database, International Migration Institute, University of Oxford.

When we further investigate emigration and immigration patterns for each of these accession countries, we can see from the graphs that post-World War II migration from and to Austria seems to have fluctuated partly as a function of business cycles. Austrian emigration peaks (mainly to Germany) have been followed by peaks in immigration, largely return migration. While emigration and immigration were in balance before accession, since 1995 immigration from the EU12 to Austria has grown, particularly from Germany, but also from Italy, Spain, the UK, Greece and France (see Figure 12a). Compared to this migration with the EU12, migration with the rest of Europe has remained low, and access to the EU has not been marked by a significant change in migration patterns (see Figure 12b). The main effect of accession seems to have been increasing migration from other EU countries.

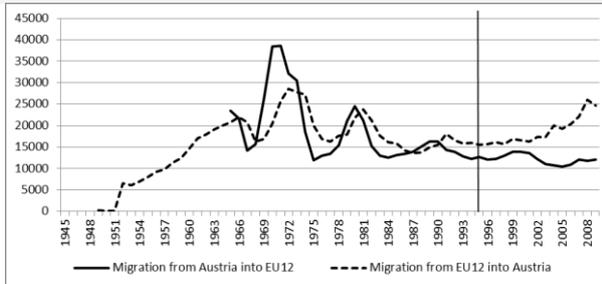
Finland has had fairly low migration to and from EU12 countries over the entire period (see Figure 12c). Until the mid-1970s, Sweden was an important destination for Finnish labour migrants, with economic cycles yielding strong emigration peaks (see Figure 12d). Finland experienced two immigration surges in the 1970s, mainly return migration from Sweden (see Figure 12d). Since accession in 1995, immigration between Finland and EU12 and non-EU12 countries has been more or less in balance at rather low levels. While decreasing migration to Sweden and elsewhere is primarily due to Finland's strong economic growth, immigration has remained relatively limited. EU accession seems to have had only a marginal, if any, influence, on these shifting migration patterns.

As the Scandinavia's industrial core nation, Sweden has experienced far more migration than Finland (see Figures 12e and 12f). The post-World War II period was characterised by significant immigration from the EU12 (mainly from Italy and Finland, as well as Denmark and Germany) as well as 'guest workers' from non-EU countries, such as Turkey. In that respect, and different from Finland, Sweden can be considered part of the old European industrial heartland; its immigration patterns were similar to Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands. After 1975, levels of migration from and towards the EU12 and the rest of Europe stabilised at lower levels, except for an immigration peak around 1989 due to the fall of the Berlin Wall and wars in the former Yugoslavia.

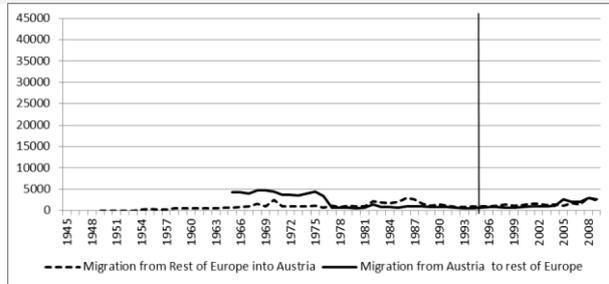
For all three accession countries, migration patterns remained largely unaffected by EU accession in 1995. Austria experienced relatively modest increases in migration from the EU12, primarily from Germany, as did Sweden, primarily from Denmark, Germany and the UK.

**Figure 12. Migration from Austria, Finland and Sweden to EU12 and rest of Europe, 1945 to 2009**

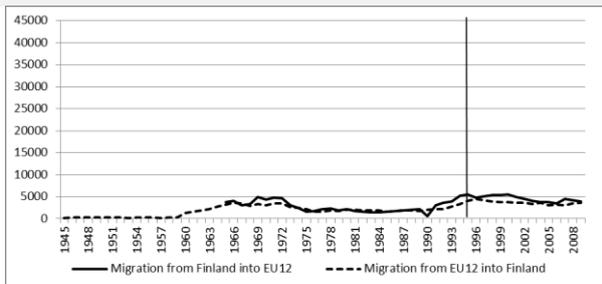
**a) Migration between Austria and EU12**



**b) Migration between Austria and non-EU12 European countries**



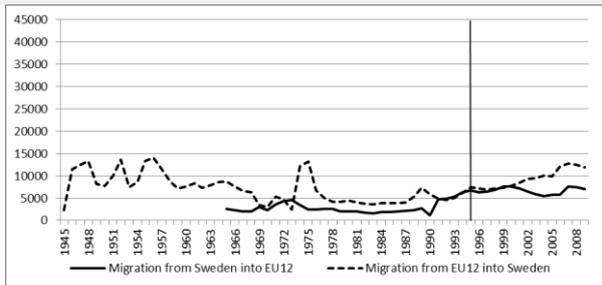
**c) Migration between Finland and EU12**



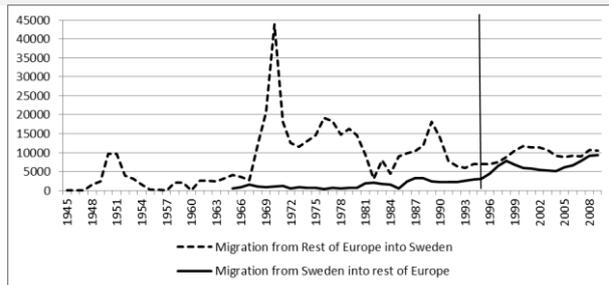
**d) Migration between Finland and non-EU12 European countries**



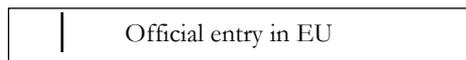
**e) Migration between Sweden and EU12**



**f) Migration between Sweden and non-EU12 European countries**



**Legend:**



Source: DEMIG C2C Database, International Migration Institute, University of Oxford.

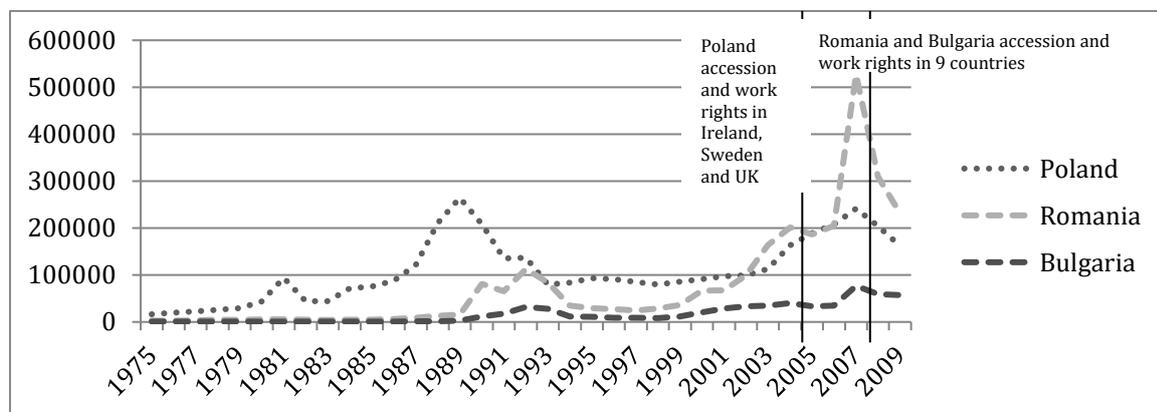
### 6.3 The Central and Eastern European accessions: 12 new member states

Similar to migration fears around the EU accession of Spain, Portugal and Greece, many EU15 countries believed and feared massive migration from Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries once they joined in 2004 and 2007. Compared to the Southern European experience, intra-European, East-West migration has structurally increased over the past decades. However, the question is to what extent and how the growth is related to EU accession *per se*.

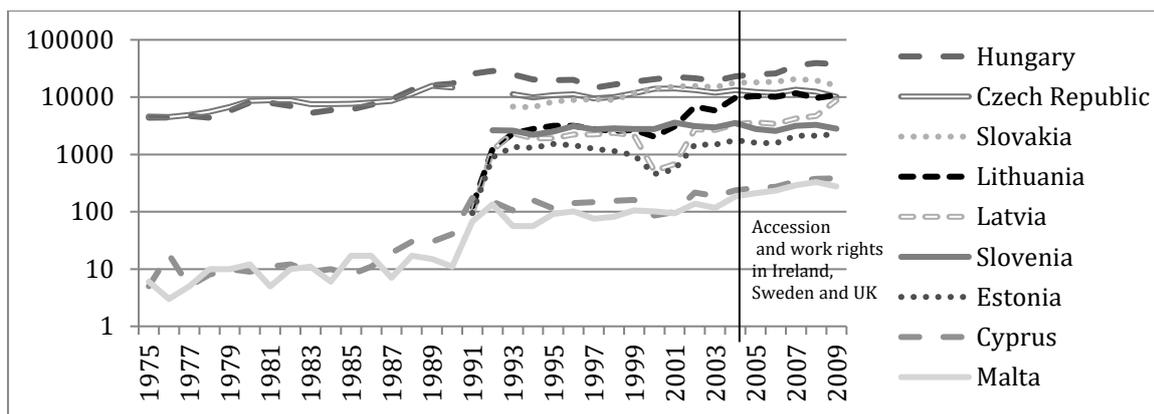
The migration trends in Figure 13 show that CEE migration had already been building since the 1980s, particularly through increasing migration from Poland to Western Europe. This trend accelerated around the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, which translated into a temporary spike in EU15-bound migration, particularly from Poland, but also from Romania and, to some extent, from Hungary and Bulgaria. This ‘Berlin Wall effect’ largely petered out by 1993, although recorded Polish emigration to the EU15 remained significant throughout the 1990s at annual levels of at least 100,000 or higher.

From 2001 to 2002, with high economic growth in Western Europe and in particular Spain, migration to the EU15 increased, especially from Poland and Romania. In addition, countries such as Bulgaria, Hungary, Lithuania and Latvia experienced rising emigration. With the exception of Lithuania, the EU15’s removal of visa requirements for the Baltic states (in 2000) as well as Bulgaria (2002) and Romania (2003) did not noticeably affect emigration from those countries. The data show that CEE emigration to EU15 countries was growing well before formal EU accession in 2004 (for most of the CEE) and 2007 (for Romania and Bulgaria).

**Figure 13. Migration to EU15 countries from the 2004 and 2007 accession countries, 1975 to 2009<sup>24</sup>**



<sup>24</sup> Note the different scales for the two graphs in Figure 13.  
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Source: DEMIG C2C Database, International Migration Institute, University of Oxford.

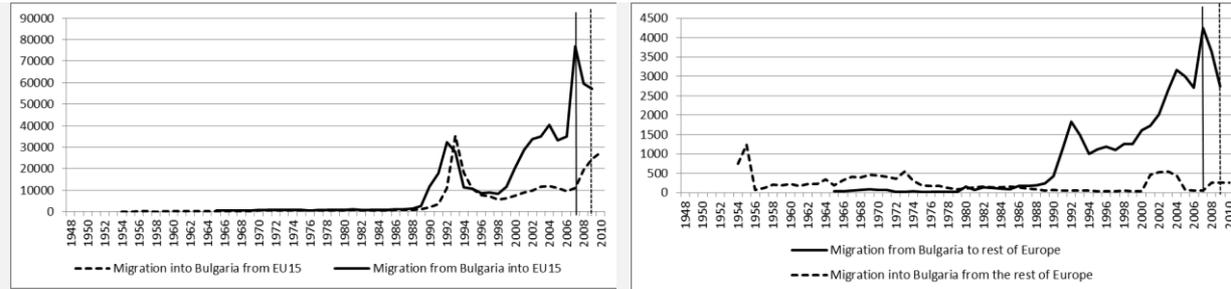
These East-West migration trends were rooted in structural changes, such as the crumbling of exit restrictions after 1989, the dismantling of welfare provisions in several CEE countries (Kureková 2011), the lifting of visa restrictions for CEE citizens by EU countries in the early 1990s, and labour demand in Western Europe along with economic growth. CEE migrant communities, which were already established from the 1980s, facilitated more migration through network connections. For instance, although migration of Polish workers increased when Poland joined the EU in 2004 (and acquired full access to the labour markets of the UK, Ireland and Sweden), this movement was not a fundamental change or acceleration rather a continuation and intensification of an existing trend that started during the Cold War, in small numbers, and had been gaining volume since the 1980s (Drinkwater, Eade and Garapich 2010). Emigration to the EU15 rose further in 2005 and 2006 (when the 2004 accession countries gained full labour rights in Finland, Greece, Iceland, Italy, Norway and Spain) and in 2007 (labour rights gained in Luxembourg and the Netherlands). Romanian and Bulgarian emigration peaked in 2007, the year of their EU accession but before gaining full labour rights. After 2008, CEE emigration dropped and consolidated at lower, pre-accession levels. While this post-2008 decrease in emigration seems to be partly related to the Global Economic Recession, another plausible factor is that the post-accession emigration surge had passed its peak.

The observed migration patterns suggest that, particularly when strong economic growth and labour demand in destination countries *coincide* with liberalised border regimes, such as in 2007, migration can temporarily surge. This pattern is exemplified in the temporary migration surge after Romania's 2007 accession, a peak that seems to resemble the temporary 'overshooting' effect following the lifting of visa restrictions found in other research (Czaika and de Haas 2017). While migration to the EU15 increased rapidly upon accession, the peak was short-lived. Migration subsequently declined and stabilised at pre-accession levels with increased levels of circulation. The analysis (data not shown here) also revealed that migration from the new accession countries to non-EU15 European countries has been negligible, except for Slovakian migration to the Czech Republic, the Ukraine and

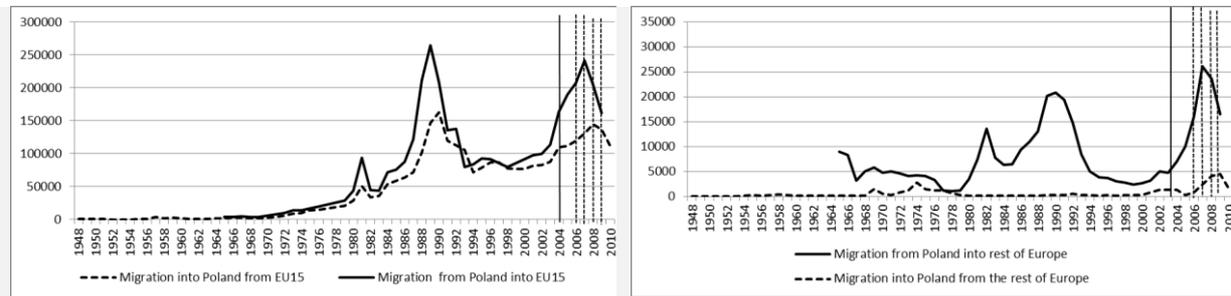
Romania, which has been significant with peaks in 2002 and 2007. The Czech Republic has also seen a small increase in migration to the rest of Europe (such as Moldova, Russia and Ukraine) since the early 2000s. Nevertheless, most European migration from Slovakia and the Czech Republic is directed towards the EU15 countries.

**Figure 14. Migration from Bulgaria, Poland and Romania to EU15 and rest of Europe, 1965 to 2010**

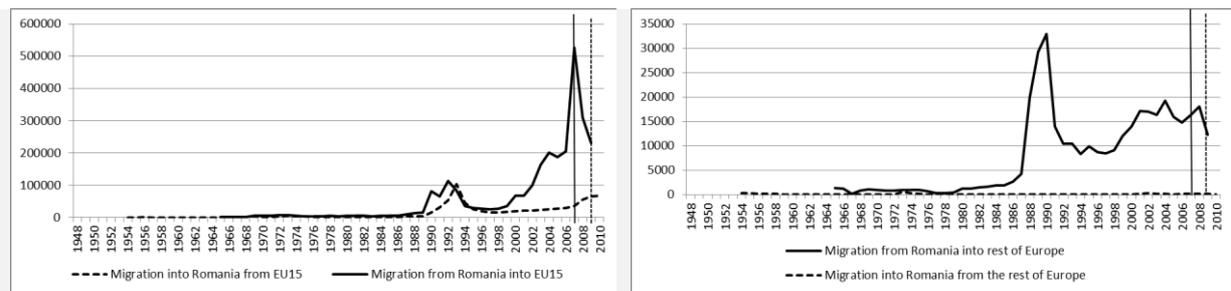
**a) Migration between Bulgaria and EU15 (different scales)**      **b) Migration between Bulgaria and non-EU15 Europe (different scales)**



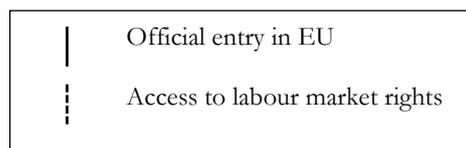
**c) Migration between Poland and EU15**      **d) Migration between Poland and non-EU15 European countries**



**e) Migration between Romania and EU15**      **f) Migration between Romania and non-EU15 European countries**



**Legend:**



To assess how free mobility regimes affected circulation patterns, Figure 14 zooms in on migration flows to and from three prominent emigration countries: Bulgaria, Poland and Romania. Emigration trends to the EU15 and the rest of Europe are strikingly similar in each case: all peaked in 2007. Emigration surges from Poland are consistently followed by a peak in immigration, which seems to mainly reflect a rise in return migration. This pattern shows the importance of simultaneously considering emigration and immigration when seeking to understand how policies affect migration. After all, a one-sided focus on flows to the EU15 would conceal relatively high levels of return. In fact, while official accumulated emigration from Poland to the EU15<sup>25</sup> between 1980 and 2009 has been 370,000, about 270,000 people moved in the reverse direction over the same period. Such reverse migration is also visible for Romania and Bulgaria since EU accession, suggesting that freedom of movement may spur emigration as well as return migration, thus increasing overall levels of circulation (see Figure 14).

In each of these countries, the late 1980s-early 1990s emigration peak was followed by a large immigration flow, almost compensating for all outflows in Bulgaria and Romania. Indeed, many post-1989 emigration spike migrants from Bulgaria and Romania seem to have returned by 1993. Perhaps these emigrants were driven by the ‘release’ of exit restrictions and saw their opportunity as ‘now or never’ to escape highly uncertain political circumstances and to find well-paid work in Western Europe. And when it became clear that the days of exit restrictions were over and Western Europe’s economic recession in 1992 and 1993 would make work harder to find, many migrants may have returned home to wait for better times.

However, the close relationship between outflows and inflows is less visible after EU accession (see Figures 14a, 14c and 14e). It is striking that for Bulgaria and Poland, return spikes occurred after the post-1989 and 2007 migration surges, but Romania lacks such a spike after 2007. The relatively low level of return to Romania does not have a clear explanation. Future analysis will enable us to examine whether returns and overall levels of circulation have picked up in more recent years, as would be expected based on the substitution effects theory (see above) and historical experiences with free mobility.

Migration patterns from Bulgaria, Poland and Romania to and from non-EU15 European countries yield some other insights (see Figures 14b, 14d and 14f). First, it is remarkable that EU accession coincided with both increasing migration to the EU15 and non-EU15 European countries. This corroborates the idea that EU accession was an important, but certainly not the only factor in

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<sup>25</sup> It should be noted that this underestimates the real size of Polish emigration, as these data do not include the UK, and the UK International Passenger Survey does not provide disaggregation for many countries, including Poland.  
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explaining emigration trends. First, research has found that economic downturns in CEE countries since the late 1990s were an important factor for migration of CEE citizens to European countries as well as to economic hubs within the CEE (Engbersen et al. 2010; Okólski and Salt 2014). Second, the data suggest that return rates from non-EU15 countries are much lower than from the EU15 countries, particularly for Bulgaria and Poland. These data further corroborate the idea that freedom of movement encourages circulation while restrictions discourage it. Romania distinguishes itself from Bulgaria and Poland with its lower return rates, its striking emigration peak in 2007 (year of accession), the heavy concentration of its migration to the EU15 countries, and very low migration to non-EU15 European destinations in the CEE and the former Soviet Union. A likely explanation for Romanians' different emigration pattern is the strong linguistic link between Romania and (particularly southern) European societies compared to predominantly Slavic- and Hungarian-speaking CEE countries.

When we compare migration growth in various enlargement phases, we see important differences in migration volume. The 1980s expansion, which brought Greece, Portugal and Spain into the EU12, sparked annual immigration between 20,000 and 45,000. Austria, Finland and Sweden, when they joined in 1995, brought a few thousand new immigrants to the EU12. The addition of countries like Bulgaria, Poland and Romania led to much larger migration surges, with Polish and Romanian emigration peaking at 242,000 and 527,000 in 2007, respectively. These large migration peaks can be explained by an economic boom in the EU15 coinciding with the acquisition of free migration and working rights. Moreover, because emigration momentum (particularly from Poland) had grown since the late 1980s, and those migrants established communities in many EU15 countries, migrant networks helped facilitate post-accession flows. The catalyst for accelerating East-West migration was the almost immediate lifting of exit restrictions following the fall of the Berlin Wall and the demise of communist rule in CEE countries. Polish and Romanian citizens began moving West, followed by other CEE citizens.

As the data presented here demonstrate, accession to the EU and full labour rights sparked temporary migration surges of varying size but were not the fundamental reasons for migration, especially for East-West flows. Rather, accession consolidated pre-established trends and, in the longer term, increased circulation. In general, post-accession migration surges tended to be short-lived and were followed by substantially lower levels. This pattern confirms expectations that migration reacts to sudden changes in border regimes, but that other factors—such as labour market opportunities at origin and destination and welfare provisions in origin countries (Kureková 2011)—are more important factors in people's long-term migration decisions.

## 7 Conclusion

This paper used a historical comparative methodology to study how liberalising intra-European border regimes, alongside continued or increasing restrictions for external border regimes, affected migration flows. Drawing on new bilateral flow data from the DEMIG C2C database, the analysis paid particular attention to the short- and long-term trends and patterns of immigration and emigration within the EU and across external EU borders. From a theoretical point of view, the long-term consequences of removing or introducing migration restrictions are ambiguous because of various ‘substitution effects’ (de Haas et al., 2018) that can potentially counteract the intended effects of immigration restrictions, particularly through their tendency to interrupt circulation and push migrants into permanent settlement. Prior empirical studies were not able to fully assess the long-term consequences of border regimes on regional migration dynamics because of their methodological design. To fill this gap, and using new data from the DEMIG C2C database, this paper analysed the long-term implications of liberal versus restrictive border regimes on EU migration processes.

We have shown that removing migration barriers can initially lead to migration surges, particularly when economic gaps between origin and destination countries are large and border openings coincide with periods of economic growth in destination countries. Indeed, the EU15 saw its largest post-accession spikes from less well-off CEE countries. However, these surges tend to be temporary, after which migration consolidates at lower levels and becomes more circular, with levels of migration mainly responding to job opportunities in destination countries. While internal liberalisation has encouraged intra-EU circular migration, permanent intra-EU migration has not increased to the structurally higher levels policymakers expected and feared, even from CEE countries. Furthermore, intra-EU migration has not replaced immigration from non-EU countries, which was an expected effect of EU enlargements. Although some replacement effects may have happened, these effects have not been large enough to curb non-EU immigration. Rather, both intra-EU and external non-EU immigration have increased simultaneously.

External migration to the EU continues for several reasons: the migration-facilitating function of existing migrant networks, family reunification policies that cannot be dismantled in liberal democracies, the fact that non-EU migrants often work in different types of jobs and labour market segments than intra-EU migrants, and lower than anticipated levels of intra-EU migration. In sum, the analysis seems to defy the idea that liberalising immigration regimes equals ‘opening the floodgates’. Free migration tends to be strongly circulatory, as is true for migration within the EU. The more restrictive entry policies are, the more migrants want to stay and maintain their migration status. Such unintended effects make it difficult for policymakers to simultaneously curb inflows while stimulating return and circulation.

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## 9 Appendix

### Notes on data used for flow reconstruction per EU grouping, 1945 to 2011

#### Migration into EU9

- Inflow data from reporting countries Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands.
- Data reported by country of residence for both citizens and foreigners for Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands.
- Data reported by country of citizenship for foreigners for France.

#### Migration from EU9

- Inflows reported by Greece, Portugal and Spain were by country of residence for both citizens and foreigners from EU9.
- Data reported on inflows by rest of European countries is by country of residence (when available—see Vezzoli, Villares-Varela and de Haas 2014 for detailed availability; otherwise country of citizenship has been used).

#### Migration into EU12

- Inflow data from reporting countries Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and the UK.
- Data reported by country of residence for both citizens and foreigners for Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Spain and the UK.
- Data reported by country of citizenship for foreigners for France, Greece and Portugal.

#### Migration from EU12

- Outflow data from reporting countries Austria, Finland and Sweden reported by country of residence for both citizens and foreigners from EU12.
- Data reported on inflows by rest of European countries by country of residence (when available—see Vezzoli, Villares-Varela and de Haas 2014 for detailed availability; otherwise country of citizenship has been used).

#### Migration into EU15

- Inflow data from reporting countries Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Finland, Germany, Greece, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and Sweden.
- Data reported by country of residence for both citizens and foreigners for Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Spain and Sweden.
- Data reported by country of citizenship for foreigners for France, Greece and Portugal.

## **Migration from EU15**

- Outflow data from reporting countries Bulgaria, Poland and Romania reported by country of residence for both citizens and foreigners from EU12.
- Data reported on inflows by rest of European countries by country of residence (when available—see Vezzoli, Villares-Varela and de Haas 2014 for detailed availability; otherwise country of citizenship has been used).