

Determinants of Migration to the European Union and Integration Strategies: A Two-Fold Cluster Analysis

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Abstract

Nowadays, Europe is facing a major challenge brought by international migration, through its economic and humanitarian dimensions. This paper is set out to design distinctive immigration clusters for the most important ten migrant host economies within the European Union (EU). The research endeavour is based on two scenarios corresponding to migrants' decisions and expectations at destination related to economic growth and labour market outcomes. We've applied the cluster analysis hinge on the Ward method and Euclidean distance on a balanced panel compiled for EU-10 migrant-receiving countries during 2000-2015. Cluster results revealed the prevailing position of Germany as the main host country relative to economic welfare, while the Nordic States (Denmark, Sweden, Finland) were preferred when it comes to employment opportunities. We further outline several feasible mechanisms and appropriate policies for immigrants' labour market integration, with benefit spill-overs on the sustainable economic development of EU-10 host countries.

Keywords: Migration, European strategies, cluster analysis, welfare, labour market outcomes

Introduction

International migration is a dynamic and multifaceted phenomenon with strapping economic, social and demographic effects on migrant-sending and receiving economies, regardless of the geographical area examined. Through its complexity, migration grasps important challenges for the European economies, bringing both benefits and pitfalls. Hence, the public discourse and policymakers' uptake the keen need to strengthen the understandings in this scientific field.

After "the financial and economic global crisis and the difficulties in overcoming this period" [1] (p. 365), Europe is now confronting with a major challenge induced by the international migration, in the framework of globalization, widely shaped by the socio-economic developments, the geopolitical circumstances and heightened interdependencies between the economies [2]. More precisely, Europe is facing a *double challenge* in terms of international migration: (*1st*) emigration from the European developing countries (from Central and Eastern Europe, CEE) continues in an upward trend, these countries having a significant part of the labour force working outside their borders (also known as *labour migration* or *economic migration*), with a specific target on receiving countries from Western and Southern Europe; and (*2nd*) poverty and arm assaults in Syria, Iraq and other neighbouring countries have forced about 1.2 million people to find refuge in Europe in 2015, and the first months of 2016, while 3,340 persons have risked their lives to get there by sea only in January 2017, and the numbers have been continuously growing throughout 2018 (known as *humanitarian migration*) [3]. *Economic (labour) migration* results from wage differentials and disparities on living standards and quality of life between migrant-sending and receiving countries, being a denotation of global economic inequality. The *humanitarian migrants* refer to "all recipients

of protection – whether with refugee status, temporary protection, subsidiary protection *etc.*” [4] (p. 4). The studies depicted on international migration within the European Union (EU) investigated, mostly, important migration effects [5, 6, 7] that are significantly different across countries (negative impacts of immigration tend to dominate on the long-run), we consider that these implications cannot be acknowledged separately from the migration determinants and proper immigrants’ integration policies. Different from other studies [8,9] and in line with Borjas [10] criticism, the present research aims to build up *distinctive immigration clusters within ten EU destination countries (EU-10), most preferred by migrants* (including Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Sweden, Spain, and the United Kingdom), reliant on two main fundamental credentials of the migration decision, namely economic welfare and employment opportunities at destination, in order to outline *proper mechanisms and distinctive policies for immigrants’ labour market integration*. We have considered a two-fold analysis, enhancing both the economic and humanitarian sides of international migration. The research is grounded on national data compiled for the EU-10 countries during the 2000-2015 lapse of time.

The paper is organized into four main parts. The shaping factors of the migration decision and migrants’ integration of basic coordinates were introduced first. The current situation of international migration in Europe is further presented to account for the amplitude and dynamics of the migration phenomenon. Further, we have depicted the data used within the empirical analysis, and the methodology applied, namely cluster analysis based on the Ward method and Euclidean distance.

The final parts entail the research results, discussions and concluding remarks.

State of the Art

Migration: Decision and integration

The *decisive factors of the emigration decision* are, primarily, the living standards expectations at destination and welfare advances [11]. Within the EU, Hoxhaj [9] investigates the wage expectations of illegal immigrants in Italy and points out that, according to the individual human capital paradigm, a large part of them overestimate the wage level that they could earn in the host country. Similarly, Ruist [12] highlights the importance of the destination country’s macroeconomic background in establishing attitudes towards migration.

Krause *et al.*, [13] examine the specific ways of immigrants’ labour market integration and reveal the importance of the Single European Labour Market (SELM) for improving the economic conditions towards welfare. However, the experts remain sceptical regarding the precise ways of obtaining these benefits, but consider that the recognition of educational diplomas and professional degrees, optimizing social security systems and overtaking the language barriers are some of the most important factors granting labour mobility. Also, Noja *et al.*, [14] (p. 23) outlined that “for the receiving countries, migration helps to fill in job vacancies and skills gap, support economic growth, and bring energy, innovation, and cultural diversity”. Last, but not least, Fertig and Kahanec [15] examined the dynamics of EU migration flows after the enlargement. They show that international migration largely depends on deepening *policy issues* and to a smaller scale of those economic and demographic.

Migration: Current situation

At present, on a global scale, there are about 68.5 million forcibly displaced persons for various reasons, out of which 25.4 million refugees (5.4 million being Palestinian refugees), 3.1 million asylum seekers, and 40 million internally displaced people. 57% of total worldwide refugees come from 3 origin countries, namely South Sudan, Afghanistan and Syria [3]. The amplexness of this phenomenon became alarming to policymakers and civil society worldwide. The large refugee flows targeting Europe’s main developed countries, as another feature of this extremely dynamic process, also highlights the importance of addressing international migration as a fundamental research pillar.

As shown in Fig. 1a, in 2015, Germany and the UK were among the main migrant destination countries in Europe. Most of the asylum seekers also opted for Germany (Fig. 1b), which received 441,900 applications, along with Sweden, with 35,800 applications (four times higher compared to 2014), and Italy [3]. On the other hand, Romania and Poland are placed among the top five migrant-sending economies in 2015, along with Syria, China and India [16]. These countries face the loss of an important part of their labour force, especially highly skilled labour, with negative effects on long-term economic development.

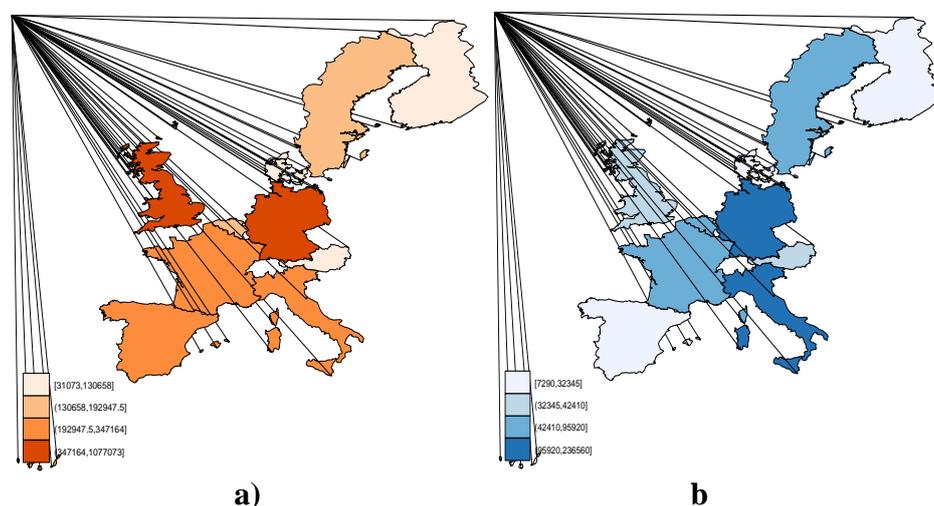


Fig. 1. Number of immigrants (a), and asylum seekers (b) within the main EU receiving countries, 2015
Source: Authors' own process of [3], [16] and [17] data in Stata

The large “variety of migration corridors, migrant-sending countries and migration motives, shape this refugee crisis into one extremely difficult to approach and coordinate” [18] (p. 9). Furthermore, even though migration is at its highest since 2007, the labour market integration of immigrants is slowly recovering, hence the unemployment rate of foreign-born workers increased by 4.3% in 2016 to reach 12.4% in European countries [16]. Since the migrants are employed in jobs entailing routine tasks, which could be charged by machines as automation progresses, the risk for job loss is also very significant for migrants. Therefore, policymakers aim to design and implement new strategies and policies that will ensure migrants' labour market integration.

Data and Research Methodology

The indicators selected as proxies for *the basic coordinates of the cluster analysis* are in line with previous researches on similar topics [14], [7] (p. 4), namely: “*i) international migration indicators: economic migration as flows of immigrants and foreign population (Immigrants); humanitarian migration as flows of refugees and asylum applicants (Asylum_app); ii) welfare and labor market indicators: real Gross Domestic Product per inhabitant in Euro (GDP_capita), GDP per person employed in USD (GDP_pers_empl); employment rate for total population (Empl_R_Total), respectively for the foreign population (Empl_R_Foreign) (%)*; annual net earnings of a two-earner married couple with two children (*Net_earnings*) (Euro); educational level measured by tertiary education (*Tert_ed*); at-risk-of-poverty rate (*Poverty_risk*) (%)”.

Compared to other studies, this paper analyses both economic (immigrants) and humanitarian (asylum applicants) migration indicators, along with several welfare and labour market specific indicators, considering national data for ten EU migrant host countries (EU-10), namely Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, the UK, Germany, Austria, Sweden, Italy and Spain. The analysed period is 2000-2015. To compile the dataset/panel, we've used the following databases: European Commission – Eurostat [17], OECD – International Migration Database [16], World Bank – World Development Indicators [19], United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) [3].

In order to harmonize our data, since it was acquired in different formats and measurement units (covering for data benchmarking, discarding inaccurate credentials) and thus place all the variables on the same scale, we have first applied *the standardization method*. This advanced method is essential for an adequate design of composite indicators based on means and standard deviation, being appropriate to assess the values for each country related to the values of the other countries considered within the panel [20]. We've further used the standardized indicators for *cluster forming and analysis*, based on the Ward method inset on hierarchical clusters, which states that “the distance between two clusters A and B is shown by how much the sum of squares will increase when they are cumulated” [21].

Results and Discussion

The research conducted within the paper focused, in an initial phase, on EU-10 cluster forming and analysis, based on 2015 data (cross-section) and two scenarios, respectively: (*1st*) welfare, living standards (income level) and poverty risk at destination; (*2nd*) labour market performance of the EU-10 receiving countries in terms of employment/unemployment according to the educational level, both for national and the foreign population.

In order to set the number of clusters, we have applied the Calinski-Harabasz criterion (cluster stop), and the dendrograms, respectively the method of graphical representation.

Thus, for the *1st scenario*, we have correlated the number of immigrants (*Immigrants*) and asylum applicants (*Asylum_app*) residing in each host country with the GDP *per capita* (*GDP_capita*), annual net earnings (*Net_earnings*) and at-risk-to poverty rate (*Poverty_risk*), and further applied the cluster analysis through the Ward method (Table 1). The variables used for cluster analysis were standardized, as described in the previous section.

Table 1. Cluster analysis results for economic and humanitarian migration, in terms of welfare, income, poverty risk, 2015

Indicator	Cluster 1			Cluster 2			Cluster 3			F	R-sq
	N	Mean	sd	N	mean	sd	N	mean	sd		
Economic migration											
Immigrants	6	-0.557	0.442	2	0.040	0.237	2	2.563	0.978	25.73***	0.880
GDP capita	6	0.690	0.541	2	-1.047	0.207	2	0.406	0.604	8.53*	0.709
Net earnings	6	1.177	0.604	2	-0.754	0.126	2	1.752	1.078	8.60*	0.710
Poverty risk	6	-0.613	0.387	2	1.761	0.015	2	0.232	0.548	28.48***	0.890
Humanitarian migration											
Asylum app	7	0.648	0.850	2	0.796	2.141	1	6.644	-	12.56*	0.782
GDP capita	7	0.711	0.497	2	-1.047	0.207	1	-0.020	-	11.27*	0.763
Net earnings	7	1.368	0.748	2	-0.754	0.136	1	0.990	-	7.27*	0.675
Poverty risk	7	-0.437	0.585	2	1.761	0.015	1	-0.155	-	12.86*	0.786

Source: Authors' research

The correlation matrixes and dendrograms (Fig. 2), resulted from the research, allowed us to properly identify three main clusters for EU-10, both in terms of economic and humanitarian migration (Table 2). The first cluster (C1) comprises 6, respectively seven receiving countries, with low attraction for immigrants and refugees, namely the Nordic States (Denmark, Finland, Sweden), but also Belgium, Austria, France, for economic migration, along with the UK, for the humanitarian one (Table 2). However, relative to their population, Sweden and Austria have had in 2015 the largest share of refugees compared to the other analysed countries [3].

At the same time, the third cluster (C3) (Table 2) points out that *in 2015*, among EU-10, the main destination country for immigrants and refugees in terms of welfare, living standards and poverty risk, was Germany (both for economic and humanitarian migration), along with UK (in the case of economic migration).

Table 2. International migration (economic and humanitarian) modelled in terms of welfare, income and poverty risk, 2015

Clusters (C)		Economic migration	Humanitarian migration	Clusters (C)	
C1	Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Austria, Sweden, France	Low	Low (to medium)	Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Austria, UK, Sweden, France	C1
C2	Italy, Spain	Medium	Medium	Italy, Spain	C2
C3	Germany, UK	High	High	Germany	C3

Source: Authors' research

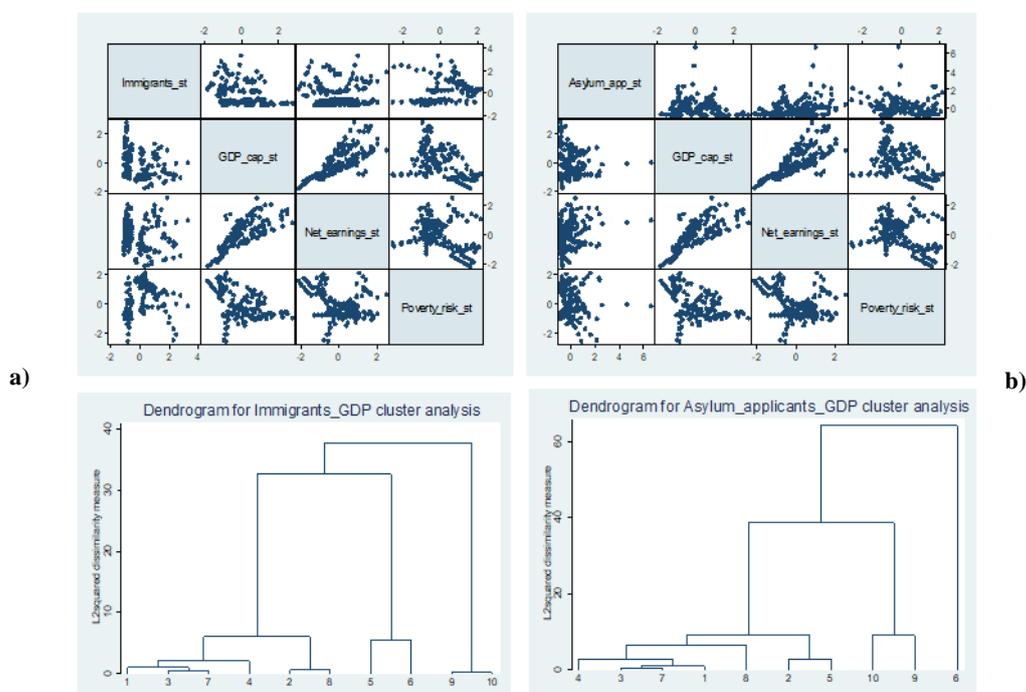


Fig. 2. Correlation matrixes and dendrograms for the economic (a) and humanitarian migration (b) cluster analysis, in terms of welfare, income, poverty risk, 2015

Source: Authors' own process

Therefore, the results confirm OECD [4] guidelines, revealing that the migration flows have registered a shift in patterns over the years, most emigrants from CEE (especially from Romania and Poland) selecting Germany as the main destination country, along with the UK, in their search for better living standards, whereas Italy and Spain experience a slight decrease in migrants' preferences compared to previous years.

The European labour market shows important signs of stability, highlighted through the statistical data which points out that unemployment tends to remain at the same level or even to slightly decrease in the following period. Key challenges faced by the EU and its Member States (MS) are mainly related to specific labour market strategies and policies, along with accurate measures aimed to improve its performance, all of these being necessary to support economic growth and employment.

Therefore, in the *2nd scenario*, in order to group the ten host countries mainly targeted by migrants, we have correlated the number of immigrants (*Immigrants*) and asylum applicants (*Asylum_app*) residing in each of these countries with the GDP per person employed (*GDP_pers_empl*), the total and foreign population employment rates (*Empl_R_Total*, *Empl_R_Foreign*), and tertiary education levels (*Tert_ed*) (Table 3).

Table 3. Cluster analysis results for economic and humanitarian migration in terms of labour market performance, 2015

Indicator	Cluster 1			Cluster 2			Cluster 3			F	R-sq
	N	mean	sd	N	mean	sd	N	mean	Sd		
Economic migration											
Immigrants	4	-0.611	0.402	4	-0.755	0.204	2	2.563	0.978	33.69***	0.905
GDP_pers_empl	4	0.208	1.413	4	0.141	0.978	2	-0.232	1.183	0.09	0.026
Empl_R_Total	4	-1.143	0.636	4	0.843	0.490	2	1.062	0.160	18.253**	0.839
Empl_R_Foreign	4	-0.970	0.405	4	0.378	0.452	2	1.562	0.273	27.11***	0.885
Tert_ed	4	-0.375	0.391	4	0.756	0.513	2	-0.255	0.079	0.88	0.202
Humanitarian migration											
Asylum_app	4	1.000	0	5	2	0	1	3	-	13.10**	0.789
GDP_pers_empl	4	0.208	1.413	5	0.234	0.872	1	-1.068	-	0.58	0.142
Empl_R_Total	4	-1.143	0.636	5	0.864	0.427	1	1.175	-	18.44**	0.840
Empl_R_Foreign	4	-0.970	0.405	5	0.654	0.730	1	1.368	-	10.29*	0.746
Tert_ed	4	-0.375	0.391	5	0.565	0.616	1	-0.311	-	3.27	0.483

Source: Authors' research

Also in this case, the correlation matrixes and dendrograms associated with the performed cluster analysis have allowed for the identification of three main clusters of EU-10 countries, both for the economic (Fig. 3a) and humanitarian migration (Fig. 3b).

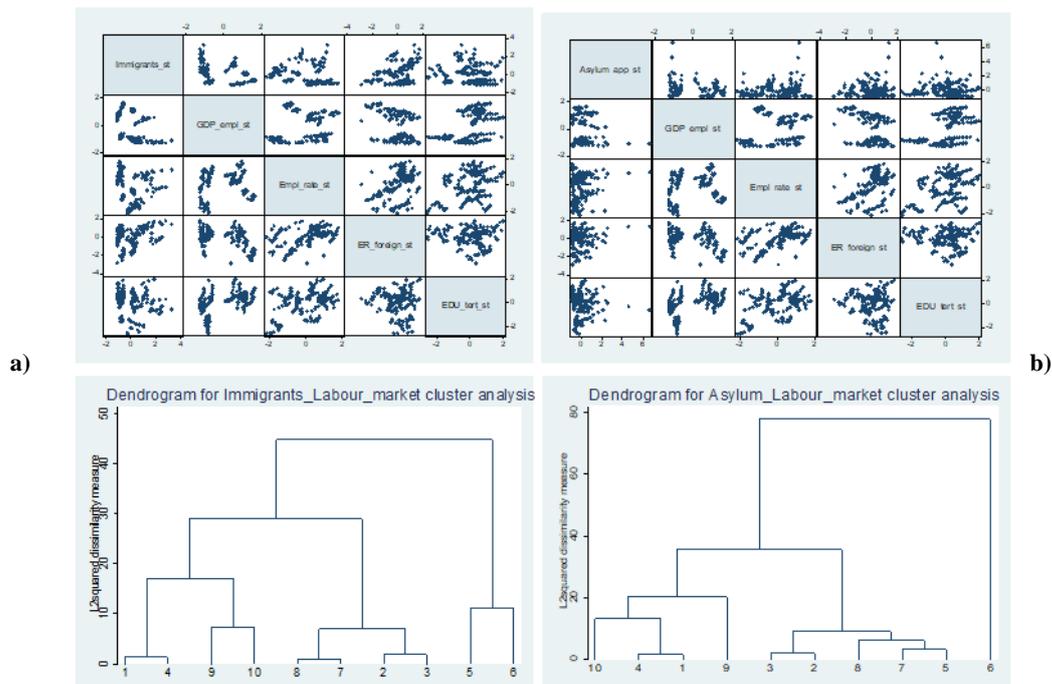


Fig. 3. Correlation matrixes and dendrograms for the economic (a) and humanitarian migration (b) cluster analysis, in terms of the host country's labour market performance, 2015

Source: Authors' own process

The results obtained after applying the cluster analysis (C1) (Table 4) revealed that Belgium, France, but particularly Italy and Spain, where the unemployment persists at higher levels, were less targeted by the immigrants compared to previous years.

Table 4. International migration (economic and humanitarian) modelled in terms of the labour market's performance, 2015

Clusters (C)		Economic migration	Humanitarian migration	Clusters (C)	
C1	Belgium, France, Italy, Spain	Low	Low	Belgium, France, Italy, Spain	C1
C2	Denmark, Finland, Austria, Sweden	Medium (to high)	Medium (to low)	Denmark, Finland, UK, Austria, Sweden	C2
C3	Germany, UK	High (to medium)	High (to medium)	Germany	C3

Source: Authors' research

The most preferred countries by immigrants and refugees (C3) were again Germany (both for economic and humanitarian migration) and the UK (only in case of economic migration), along with the Nordic States (C2), renowned for the extremely effective labour market strategies that ensure a high educational level of the labour force with positive spill-over in terms of labour market insertion (employment rates) and GDP *per person* employed (productivity).

Concluding Remarks

Labour mobility represents a basic pillar of the European economic integration process and essential freedom acknowledged to the MS through the community treaties. However, currently, within the European Union the migration challenges are amplified by the disintegration risk brought by the UK's referendum and associated decisions on Brexit, immigration being one of the main credentials advanced for this outcome.

The present empirical analysis aimed to identify the shaping factors of the international migration (both economic and humanitarian), and thus to group the EU-10 immigrants and asylum applicants according to the basic reasons for their migration decision (cluster analysis).

The results showed that the main host economies targeted by immigrants and refugees *in terms of welfare, living standards and poverty risk*, were Germany and the UK (the migrants are mainly coming from Poland and Romania that are considered labour-exporting countries, especially highly-skilled labour). On the other hand, by reporting *to the host countries' labour market performance/employment opportunities*, the results reveal that Germany owns the same dominant position among the considered economies, but, in this particular case, the Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland and Sweden) renowned for their efficient flexicurity policies, which combine effective measures of labour market flexibilization with income and employment security strategies, become extremely attractive for the foreign population. These results are in line with the ones obtained by Eichhorst and Konle-Seidl [22].

Therefore, considerable attention should be given by the policymakers across Europe to training programs aimed at developing new skills required for employability (digital and soft competencies), by keeping sight of the relation between the quality of education and economic growth. At the same time, workplace rotation, programs to promote entrepreneurship by encouraging unemployed or inactive persons to start up their own businesses and become self-employed, all fit this priority.

Decision-makers should consider and implement several means to enhance employment conditions, mainly through targeted *active labour market policies (ALMPs)*, that have argued to conduct favourable outcomes on the labour market integration of immigrants [7]. The consequences of *ALMPs* upon the unemployment rate of the foreign population are important elements for analysing the strategies on immigrants' integration. The *ALMPs* include numerous categories, each one carrying out a different effect over the labour market performance and seeking the attraction and integration of the unemployed [23], such as: training programs; workplace rotation (replacing an employee with an unemployed person or with one belonging to a vulnerable group for a certain period); programs to enhance entrepreneurship by encouraging unemployed or inactive persons to start up their own businesses [24]. Moreover, Eichhorst and Konle-Seidl [22] show the significance of flexicurity and

ALMPs for migrants' inclusion in the labour market and increasing the employment rate of the foreign population.

A reassessment of *passive labour market policies (PLMPs)* should also be accounted for by policymakers since our findings have revealed that unemployment benefits perform as a restraint for immigrants to become actively involved in the labour market. *PLMPs* represent another important variable with different and controversial effects in terms of the labour market outcomes [25]. The *PLMPs* refer mainly to: (i) unemployment benefits, granted to secure income during the unemployment period, as well as (ii) early retirement schemes which facilitate retirement (total or partial) of elderly workers with lower opportunities in finding a job.

The migration specific policies should also center on comprehensive educational strategies, since we proved that growth in the educational level for the low-skilled workers (towards upper-secondary) determines a decline in unemployment rates of the foreign-born population [26]. However, among tertiary-educated labour, the migrant selection process is enforced, proving to have controversial effects. Our estimations also highlight that international migration can be influenced through specific measures aiming to induce wage changes, since we've acknowledged that immigrants are mainly attracted by the opportunity of gaining a higher income at destination, sustained by "the emergence of new sets of institutions shaping migration flows (visa-free travel, opening labour markets, student mobility programs, and the introduction of the new transport modes)" [27] (p. 23).

The limitations of our research mainly enclose the reduced extent of available data for longer time series that are essential in grasping the wideness and dynamics of the international migration process.

As future research, we pursue to broaden the immigration analysis in a reciprocal manner, with a specific focus on socio-psychological credentials that are essential for migrants' wellbeing and their role in migrant integration strategies.

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