GLOBALIZATION AND ANTIGLOBALIZATION

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE? THE EU MIGRATION FLOWS AFTER THE BREXIT REFERENDUM
Possible Future Scenarios by the Polish Example

Alexandra David and Anna Barwińska-Małajowicz

One of the unanswered questions after the Brexit referendum and the follow-up negotiations between the United Kingdom (UK) and the European Union (EU) is the question of migration and the related European free movement of workers. To date, the discussion led by media and some experts concentrates primarily on the future of the EU immigrants who want to stay in the UK after it leaves the EU. This paper discusses several possibilities related to the length of stay of EU immigrants and related long-term-scenarios. The future status of EU immigrants in the UK and of future migrant generations in the UK is taken into consideration. The central question is whether there will be opportunities for new EU immigrants to enter the UK labour market. Alternatively, will the free movement of workers no longer include the British Isles?

Between these open questions, debates and negotiations, there are voices that attempt to embed the discussion in a broader European political and societal context. In line with the latter, this article moves away from the 'EU immigrants remain' scenario in the UK to ask 'Where do we go from here?' by sketching possible Polish migration flows after the UK exits the EU. Moreover, this question sets the topic within a broader debate on Europe's future and argues that the 'migration crisis' alone is a symptom of European citizens' growing distrust in their political system. Finally, this article presents a potential approach to continue the EU internal migration flows in a changing European society at a time when Europe is being reshaped by external migration flows.

Keywords: *future migration, EU migration flows, Polish migrants, UK immigrants, Brexit, Post-Brexit migration scenarios, New Europe, Free Movement of Workers.*

Introduction

The Brexit referendum on Friday, June 23, 2016, and its aftermath shook up Europe and one of its biggest Achilles' heels: *migration* and *the European free movement of workers* (European Commission N.d.). While Europe was in the midst of the so-called refugee crisis and trying to fix the incoming refugee migration flows from overseas (mainly caused by the Syrian war) and the inner European political and societal

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conflicts related, the Brexit referendum showed that '[…] a major argument of the Leave campaign [was] that Brexit would allow more control over the flow of immigrants to the UK from the rest of the EU' (Wadsworth 2016). Moreover, as several experts (*Ibid.*) and the media reported, it appeared that a specific population in Britain was concerned about the impact of immigrants on the labour market, especially wages and the British quality of life. The results of the referendum shocked the EU since immigration – even if it challenges several European member states and their systems – can be regarded, to some extent, as an opportunity for the European labour markets (European Commission N.d.) and demographic development and, at the same time, can be a driving force for regional economies (David 2015; David *et al.* 2012: 25–35; Ther 2017).

Despite the current uncertainty regarding how or if Europe and the UK will complete the Brexit negotiations, this article is motivated by the question '*Where do we go from here?*' with a focus on possible consequences of Brexit on the free movement of workers through the lens of Polish migration flows. Since this focus cannot be grounded in practice, this article presents possible post-Brexit migration scenarios and deepens the discussion.

In the Search for Answers

One thing is certain: the EU, as we knew it before the Brexit referendum, no longer exists and will not return to its former shape. What the UK decided in June 2016 now, in retrospect, seems not to be a complete rejection of the European spirit but rather a cry for help from certain citizen groups who, after years of despair, tried to capture attention for their needs and concerns.

As usual, in public discourse and the media, many potential reasons for leaving the EU were discussed. However, the success of the Leave campaign can be explained by some of its propagandistic warnings: for example, how the UK citizens will become poorer over time, how the unemployment rate will rise and misinformation about the money sent to the EU weekly instead of investing in its own interests. However, the main reason seems to be EU immigration to the UK and the wider question of national and cultural identity (BBC 2016), which suited Leave's message and therefore was used frequently. In this context, the question arises: *How is it possible that the EU immigration caused such a reaction from the UK citizens, especially after years of living side by side with different groups of immigrants, mainly in peace and security?*

Some possible answers to this question can be found in the response to the terroristic attacks of September 11, 2001, in New York, followed by the 2005 attack in London. However, even if these incidents have already influenced the relationship between UK citizens and immigrants in general, experts note that, finally, the refugee crisis in Europe was the decisive aspect for many British voters. Still, the *why* also remains unanswered in reference to the refugee crisis.

For instance, David (2017: 16) argues that the so-called European refugee crisis was not the primary crisis Europe has faced in recent years. Rather, an increased inflow of immigrants (in this case, refugees) revealed problems to which Europe had given too little attention in the past decades: (1) the permanent challenge of securing skilled workforces for an innovative and competitive economy; (2) the permanent challenge of integrating vulnerable groups into the labour market and taking diversity into account; (3) the permanent challenge to establish a fair balance between the member states regarding social and economic issues; and (4) the permanent challenge to develop and implement local and regional concepts in order to integrate the first three points.

In his book *After Europe*, Krastev (2017) explains that globalisation, open borders and the free movement of *people, goods* and *ideas* across Europe also have negative effects on European citizens, who were neglected for many years. Krastev particularly refers to citizens in Eastern Europe and the British Isles. In his description of these cultures, both still have a strong sense of the *local* because these areas were never faced with the heavy immigration flows that Central Europe has seen since World War II. Krastev argues that, in particular, the rural areas of Eastern European countries and the British Isles (until the borders were opened) stand for the many smaller countries in Europe that hope to stop or slow a loss of regional identity by adopting a misleading understanding of integration that results in segregation. According to Krastev, the main causes of Brexit began with the explanation of uncertainties of many EU citizens about European developments in the political and economic climate. The opening of borders and the shift from local to global contexts split Europe's population into groups of global and local citizens. On the one hand, these two groups symbolise '*winners*' of Europeanisation and, on the other hand, the *disconnected* citizen, to whom open borders bring even more insecurity (Krastev 2017). This division in European society is widening between people who support diversity and pluralisation and those who are opposed: in other words, the EU citizens who feel free and who enjoy the idea of the EU and free movement, and those who are afraid of open borders and loss of identity. Europe's *winners* are open-minded towards global flows and immigrants, regarding the inflow of foreigners as a chance to the Western European societies in terms of skilled workforce – not least because the winners know that, in times of real crisis, they are able to leave, finding living and working place somewhere else, leaving behind challenging situations. The disconnected parts of Europe's population must remain in the *local*, due to a lack of possibilities. They continue to live in fear of new competition for jobs, homes or education with the newcomers.

The fact that digitalisation is no longer a future scenario but is present society as a whole makes the situation even worse. Through daily discussion of how much digitalisation will change people's employment and cut even more jobs (primarily in low-skill based sectors), insecurity grows and younger generations lose life orientation. In *Wasted Lives* Zygmunt Bauman (2003) describes how new generations are depressed by globalisation. By losing their jobs, their projects and their orientation points faster than ever, they also lose the confidence of being in control of their lives and having a social place of their own. Also, several deprived groups of people – in this case, in the UK – could observe the development of successful immigration stories, pointing even more to their own economic and financial woes. Thus, after years of watching successful immigrant integration into the UK's labour markets and society, the refugee crisis – by the heavy inflow of immigrants to the EU in a short period – unintentionally awoke national fears, which led to false scenarios of what could be. The answer to these fears was the revival of a strong sense of the local and nostalgic references to old times with closed borders – all motivated by the idea of defending the known and pushing away the unknown.

Against this background, Brexit was inescapable. Leaving the EU was the next possible way for UK citizens to release the pressure of complete openness despite having to pay a high price to leave free Europe and return to familiar territory.

This development in the UK population was not unexpected; rather, it was one of the many European examples of the *silent revolution* against terrifying, and often incomprehensible, future scenarios. In a similar vein, the reaction of the Western Euro-

pean countries – such as Germany, Austria, France and the Netherlands – to the newest European migration inflows results in increased votes for right-wing parties and choosing populism.

The Age of Migration (revisited)

In *The Age of Migration*, which describes the worldwide migration trends, Castles with co-authors (2014) points to the fact that migration is as old as humanity. Since migration is a natural phenomenon, it can neither be stopped nor avoided. Immigration flows can be steered to a certain degree (see, as prominent examples, Canada or the USA) but in general, strict migration policies create even bigger migration flows. The explanation for such behaviour is easy to detect: the more forbidden a country of destination is to potential migrants, the greater the desire to reach these countries, hoping for a better quality of life. Moreover, it is not a secret that wealthy Western countries, particularly the USA and Western Europe, could, for many years, grow and do business at the expense of poorer and third-party countries (see former colonialisation as an example). Today, globalisation and digital technologies influence individual migrants' behaviour, even stronger in terms of identifying a specific part of the world as their future home and demanding the right to do so. The destination points for people who plan to migrate are no longer a simple narrative. Streamed videos and pictures available on social media create partially false impressions and promise benefits to the potential migrants that do not exist. This is one explanation why so many migrants are disillusioned by reality after reaching their target.

Although this article does not revisit the complete history of European migration, it does provide examples of historical European migration patterns. Moreover, throughout history it was often immigrants who challenged European countries and their citizens and, at the same time, managed to provide new ideas – many of which turned into innovations.

Europe has a long tradition of migration and refugee migration. Before the two World Wars, Europe was considered a continent of emigration rather than immigration. Nevertheless, in the 17th century, the Huguenots[1] fled their homes because of their Calvinistic beliefs. In the persecution of the Huguenots, the term *réfugié* was used for the first time, and became widely used during World War I when refugee migration became a global challenge for the first time in Europe (Ther 2017). Following the example of the Huguenots, many religious minorities crossed the borders of Europe during the World Wars. After World War II, a change in migration flows occurred. Europe was chosen by a large number of immigrants from former colonial states and became an immigration continent. Moreover, Western European countries, in particular, experienced a lack of workforce due to the fast-growing economy after World War II. This rapid development in the economy, welfare, lifestyle, political and social security and other socio-political areas and so forth (Gans *et al.* 2013: 329–377) motivated people to emigrate to and within Europe, leading to long-term chain migration. Since then, migrants have belonged to European life and its street scene (Yildiz 2013).

In the past few years, the internal migration within Europe and external migration to Europe has increased again, not least because of the free European movement and worldwide political upheavals, such as the refugee crisis (due to the Arab Spring and the Syrian war). Thus, immigration has become an even stronger factor of the European economy (OECD 2014). As noted above, effects of the financial and economic crises, internationalisation, and promotion of free movement within the EU have led to new migration patterns, pluralisation and globalisation of migration (David and

Barwińska-Małajowicz 2015: 114–125). The new migration patterns differ in several ways from those seen previously, mostly in the dimensions of time and place. Whereas in Europe, during times of industrialisation and later between 1970 and 1990, people tended to be permanent or long-term migrants who moved bilaterally between a domestic and a receiving country, the current situation shows a tendency towards temporary and circular migration (Nowicka 2007). It seems as if permanent migration rebounds, despite refugee migration. Also, it has been observed that, since the late 1990s, new forms of migration patterns have solidified. David *et al.* (2012: 25–35) refer to these as *New Nomads*, inspired by the concept of Saxenian's *New Argonauts* (Saxenian 2007). Usually, this primarily involves highly skilled migrants. New Nomads stand out by choosing multiple destination countries, moving from one region to another within a certain period. They live transnationally (Pries 2013: 67–82), including return migration to their domestic region and emigrating anew (Klagge and Klein-Hitpaß 2010: 1632–1651). This pattern underlines how, in addition to transformed time and space dimensions, there is also a change in the people who are migrating. Although *new* migrants are better educated and more mobile than the previous generation, this does not mean that every case has a success story to offer. Even when there is a skills shortage in several European countries, many migrants still do not have the adequate entrance requirements for the labour markets of the receiving countries; see, as an example, the current refugees from North Africa (*e.g.*, Syria). Moreover, these migrants fight challenges of inclusion such as the recognition of their qualifications or language skills. In turn, even highly skilled migrants have to deal with uncertainties that are increased by globalisation effects. One such effect was the Brexit referendum, which changed EU migrants' future in a blink. It seemed as if the European opening of borders was the worst outcome for the UK citizens, while it was the best outcome for much of Eastern Europe's population: 'Europe's leaders thus face a dilemma: curbing freedom of movement may help to keep the UK in the EU, but it runs the risk of delegitimising the project in the eyes of its newer members' (Kratsev 2015).

What will Happen to EU Immigrants after Brexit?

As described above, the effect of immigration from Eastern Europe to the UK has, over time, turned into a heated debate in Britain. However, there are several British examples that show immigration can change a cityscape positively and make it even more attractive. Boston (Lincolnshire), for instance, is known in Britain as a town that has been extremely affected by the EU immigration: mainly by Polish migrants who arrived after 2004. In the example of Boston, the BBC reported changes in the town by immigrants (Cook 2016). Before the EU immigration, Boston was a sleepy farming town: 'Growers used to bring in transient workers for the brief harvest periods' (*Ibid*.). In doing so, positive effects arose and the local economy has diversified over time and created work all year around. Moreover, even if these effects are small in comparison to the national level, for Boston it meant at least a transformation regarding its image, attraction for younger people and the cityscape. Also, the findings of the European project *'Enter to Entrepreneurship'*, under the Erasmus+ Programme,[2] showed that EU immigrants could contribute to Boston's entrepreneurial activities and increase the numbers of students at the local college.[3] Regarding this cultural change, the Brexit referendum and its possible effects will again change many UK towns to a certain extent when EU immigrants may leave the country due to new – and so far, uncertain – regulations.

Several scenarios have been discussed in the media, related to the future procedure for EU citizens in Britain. Some report that EU citizen will still be able to travel to Britain for work after Brexit, but this will go hand in hand with new immigration plans (Webb 2017). The proposals, which have not yet been fully developed, would allow EU immigrants to enter Britain to try and find work without applying for a visa. On the contrary, firms who plan to hire EU workers would have to apply for special sponsorship permits. Thus, the number of permits allowed would then be set by the government (Mullin, Webb and Harper 2017). The Prime Minister has confirmed in media statements that the current EU immigrants living in Britain – approximately 3.3 million – will not gain settled status and permanent residency (Bone 2014) unless they have lived in the UK for at least five years. Other policies under discussion would allow EU nationals who have lived in the UK for fewer than five years to apply through the Home Office for a residency document over a two-year window – an average of 4.100 submissions a day and to pay around £65 each – generating £195 million. This proposal will include family members and partners resident in the UK at the cut-off date, including those who have not yet reached five years' residence. EU immigrants living in the UK legally for at least five years will receive a type of settled status, allowing them to live, work and claim benefits just as before the referendum. However, these statements are still in progress. The German daily newspaper *Frankfurter Allgemeine (FAZ)* reported in September 2017, concerning a confidential policy document, that the UK will stop the EU immigration flow immediately after Brexit (Theurer 2017). According to Peter Bone, this may happen by March 2019. Further, the *Guardian* reports that the government '[…] is going to redeem the referendum promise to end the free movement and "take control" of EU immigration' (Bone 2014).

Since the free movement of workers is one of the four freedoms linked to the single market, it seems to be indisputable that immigration rules cannot stay the same after Brexit. Even if people come from the EU to work in the UK and vice versa, the free movement will not be free any longer. For instance, the UK government proposes that EU citizens receive the status of *third-country nationals* from the day after Brexit. That proposal means that EU citizens will have fewer rights in the UK than British nationals would have in the EU. The EU immigrants would not only lose their right to vote in local elections, but their future family members would also have to prove a minimum income, as the German newspaper *Spiegel Online* reports (Spiegel 2017).

There are several scenarios regarding the future of EU immigrants in the UK. Moreover, even if the newest development in the Brexit discussion – the offer of Donald Tusk (the current president of the EU) asking the British to continue their EU membership and considering a second possible referendum – seems more positive than all negotiations until now. A return to the free movement between the UK and the other EU member states seems to be illusive at this point.

The Long Tradition of Polish Emigration Flows

Poland has always been considered as a country of emigration. By the end of the eighteenth century, when industrialisation began and, into the nineteenth century, more people emigrated from Poland than from any other European country. For instance, there are currently 1.5 to 2 million people in Germany alone who have all or part of their ethnic, cultural and linguistic identity rooted in Poland (Finkel N.d.).

Throughout history, Polish migration flows changed constantly, influenced by internal political restrictions, chain migration, the transformation of the Polish political

system, Poland's EU membership, the opening of borders, free movement of workers and other cultural or political elements *etc.* For instance, as we know from the migration literature, the Carpathian voivodeship in Poland has a long history of migration routes to the USA (David and Barwińska-Małajowicz 2015: 114–125). Only a few Polish regions, such as Masuria and Silesia, were accepted in Germany as the so-called *Ruhrpolen* working in the coal-mines and steal-mines of the German region Ruhr Area, or later as the late-resettlers, a group of people who claimed to have German ancestors and the right to change nationality. Thus, for other Polish regions, a getaway from the regime was only possible by choosing non-European destination countries. After the opening of borders and the introduction to the free movement of workers, Polish migrants who were far away from the traditional migration destinations, such as the USA and Germany, have chosen the UK as their new migration destination, not least because they could not count on already established migration networks in the traditional receiving countries of Polish emigrants, but they could use the English language, which, especially for the younger and better qualified generation, was preferable.

Thus, after Poland joined the EU, new Polish migration patterns began to increase (*e.g.*, seasonal migration, circular migration, New Nomads) (David *et al.* 2012: 25–35). Among the emigrants, young Polish people – often highly educated – were the main beneficiaries. However, the mass migration began even before Poland's entry into the EU. After the EU-8 countries joined, it became clear that the older members (such as Germany) did not intend to open their labour markets to immigrants from the new member states. On the contrary, some EU countries, such as Britain, opened their labour markets immediately, which was regarded as an invitation – especially to young Poles. Since then, the UK has been the main destination for Polish migrants (60 % of Polish immigrants choose UK as destination). Generally speaking, the Polish migrant workers represent 56 % of all migrants from the new member states regarding the migration related to free movement of workers (Finkel N.d.). In regards to Germany, as the second preferred emigration destination for Poles, the explanation for the high rank lies mainly in the old migration networks, the stable German economy and the stable labour markets. Also, Germany borders Poland. The short distance between two countries often encourages migrants into a circular migration, related to the unchanged push and pull factors on both sides. The Polish Central Statistical Office (GUS)[4] estimates that, at the end of 2015, there were temporarily around 2,397,000 Polish citizens living outside of Poland, 77,000 (3.3 %) more than in 2014. Among the EU member states, the largest number of Polish inhabitants remained in Great Britain (720,000) followed by Germany (655,000), the Netherlands (112,000), Ireland (111,000) as well as Italy (94,000).

The possibility that, after Brexit, the situation of Polish immigrants in Great Britain will not change is relatively low. Thus, this paper presents two scenarios for discussion: first, the change of Polish migration flows to further EU countries, such as Germany; and, *second,* the return of Polish migrants to Poland. Europe's citizens will feel consequences for both.

Where do We Go from here?

Germany – a 'catch basin' after Brexit?

The refugee inflow, which surprised Germany in 2015 and 2016, is not a new phenomenon for migration research and thus is no real surprise. In fact, established migration researchers know (Aigner 2017; Oltmer 2017) that, in times of political upheavals and war situations in various countries of origin, the refugee migration to economically strong

countries, such as Germany, is predictable. Nevertheless, for Germany, the 2015–2016 inflow was the largest since the mid-1990s, with approximately 1.1 million refugees in 2015, of which approximately 800,000 want to remain (Brücker *et al.* 2016a; BAMF 2017). However, the current situation differs not only in size from former refugee flows but also in intent, because many asylum-seekers come from countries where there is little prospect of return, at least in the short term (OECD 2017), although the International Organisation for Migration recorded the first refugee migration of 54,069 was recorded with 54,069 refugees returning home in January, 2016.

In the same period, blended by media focussing on the refugee migration development, the numbers for EU immigrants in Germany increased again, with Poles ranked first. Having surpassed the first shock to some extent after the Brexit referendum, the first Polish migrants changed the direction of their migration flows. As a consequence of Brexit, the reason to choose Germany again as the destination country could be the old migration networks, but also the good foundation for integration of immigrants to the labour market (David 2017; David *et al.* 2017), especially due to several new concepts related to entering the labour market. These concepts were developed and implemented in Germany in the context of the refugee crisis after 2015–2016, such as the finding of the German project 'Selectivity and ambiguity in working cultures – SELMA'[5] reveal. The decrease in unemployment rates since 2010 as well as the skills shortage in some prominent sectors, such as health, are also inviting factors in migrants' motivation (Ther 2017). The fact is that, in September 2015 alone, more EU immigrants entered Germany than refugees. In that month, 730,000 Poles, 591,169 Italians, and 435,914 Romanians held first three ranking positions, along with others from Greece, Croatia, Bulgaria and other countries and so forth (Ausländer-verzeichnis… 2015).

For both EU immigrants and new refugees, this is an unusual situation. In a sense, both groups are competing for working and living space in Germany. In this case, at first glance the EU immigrants seem to have the advantage since they have a better knowledge of the arrival country and the German labour market. They also have permission to work and have networks at their disposal. These assets help them to overcome first entrance and integration barriers. In contrast, refugees must apply for permission to work, which is part of the long process of their status and recognition. Although EU immigrants appear to enter the labour market after a short time, refugees still have problems in finding jobs. The slow labour market integration of refugees often includes language barriers, but the recognition of qualifications is also a factor. A study of the German Institute for Employment Research (IAB)[6] shows that a large number of refugees who came to Germany 15 years ago are still facing the challenge of entering the labour market. After ten years in Germany, just 60 % of the refugees who arrived at that time were able to work.

Apart from the formal barriers, the significance of refugee immigrants' *cultural roots* should be stressed. For many years, Western societies rejected the importance of culture while discussing integration. They were afraid of starting a critical debate that could exclude certain groups and run the danger of enforcing specific political orientations. 'Today labour market experts warn against continuing integration without specific emphasis on cultural roots and differences (David and Coenen 2017: 77–101).

However, with all the cultural and infrastructural advantages of EU immigrants, such as Poles, current refugees could become competition after being recognised as full

EU citizens. Compared to refugee and migrant groups from other countries of origin, the newest refugee immigrants (*e.g.*, Syria in particular) often have recognised educational pathways. For example, 37 % of recent immigrants attended secondary schools, and 32 % completed secondary school (Brücker *et al.* 2016b). 13 % of the target group has a university or university degree, and 12 % have already started training in their home country or related pre-vocational institutions. In the same study, 46 % stated that they want to complete a school or vocational qualification and 66 % are motivated to pursue a university or vocational qualification. Also, the majority of new arrivals are of working age. When sorting asylum applications by age group and gender from January to May 2017, the largest group of asylum-seekers is young men aged 18 to 30 who seek asylum in Germany (BAMF 2017). The proportion of men (62.2 %) in the total number of approximately 800,000 of is significantly higher than that of refugee women (37.8 %).

Finally, this means that after a certain period of the current refugees in Germany, the situation between the EU immigrants, such as Polish workers, and the refugee groups could change, especially in regards to the Polish immigrants with lower qualification levels as today there is less need for low- and medium-skilled workers.

However, both the EU and the refugee immigrant groups in Germany are also facing the effects of the anti-European atmosphere in Germany, which is mirrored in the political climate (see last German voting in September 2017). Naika Foroutan, a German expert on migration and integration, describes in an interview with the German *Süddeutsche Zeitung (SZ)* (Braun and Foroutan 2018; Theurer 2017) that, in addition to increasing social inequality, devaluation and lack of recognition dominate the German society. She argues that central problems of society are played against each other in accordance with the motto '[it] was no longer possible to take care of the social differences because one had to deal with the problems of further minorities' (*Ibid*.).

Between these discussions, groups of German citizens report experiences similar to the British responses regarding their despair and their difficulties in finding adequate jobs and qualifications. At the moment, Germany is under tension, as Foroutan explains (Braun and Foroutan 2018) and is stressed by the search for identity. How this German situation will develop is another future scenario, and migration will play a major role here as well.

Return migration to Poland welcomed – just not yet!

There is a broad strand of literature discussing the Polish return migration (Klagge and Klein-Hitpaß 2010: 1632–1651; Coniglio and Brzozowski 2018: 85–105; David 2015). Often the literature spotlights the positive effects of return migration on the domestic countries, which at this time mainly focusses on the regional and economic dimensions. However, Cassarino (2004: 253–279) has demonstrated how important it is to understand every single migration process, due to the various types of returnees. He requests a differentiated view of the motives, desires and experiences of return migrants. In this way, he hopes for better insight into who returns when and why and why some returnees appear as actors of change in specific social and institutional circumstances at home whereas others do not. Cassarino proposes that the difference between whether a migrant can contribute to the regional economy or not is a consequence of further issues than solely the qualification degree. In the same vein, Coniglio and Brzozowski (2018: 85–105) state that return migration can have modest or detrimental effects on the domestic country, depending on whether the migration experience was successful and the

migrant integrated at a certain level into the system of the receiving country. Additionally, re-integration into the structures of the domestic country plays a role.

David (2015) claims that primary return migration of highly skilled workers can be profitable for regions, especially when ex-emigré highly skilled workers return to the domestic region, sharing new knowledge and newly acquired skills. Highly skilled workers who leave their native country and become part of the foreign society acquire numerous skills during their stay abroad. They become familiar with foreign, and often different, cultures, which broaden their intercultural skills. Moreover, they are often confronted with new ways of working in organisations and labour processes and approach a new way of solution-oriented thinking. Apart from socioeconomic abilities, highly skilled workers acquire personal knowledge that relates to their new living situation. In the case of successful incorporation in the new environment, highly skilled workers grow according to their capacities; in the best case, they become global citizens. The best case described by David (*Ibid.*) often, in reality, meets challenges. For instance, when there is a mismatch during the migration process, skills may be wasted and, instead of beneficiary outcomes, a reduction of economic potential after return can be observed (Coniglio and Brzozowski 2018: 85–105). According to GUS (2009), in recent years, several surveys of return migrants were carried out in Poland to identify the reasons for return. The respondents gave the following answers: the end of the period of planned stay abroad (20 %), termination of the contract (20 %), family longing (16 %), termination of seasonal work (10 %) and graduation (about 4 %). Only a very small group of the return migrants to Poland reported that the main reason for return is improvement in the Polish labour market (about 2 %) or the intention to start a business in Poland (about 3 %). Another aspect of the return migration is that the return migrants to Poland are not solely highly skilled individuals. A high number of Polish migrants are low- and medium-qualified and leave Poland due to unemployment, hoping for a successful job search abroad. However, the migration process often fails, and the return migrants are forced to return home. Thus, among Britain's Poles, many come from economically deprived small towns or even villages in their domestic region. Due to this situation, return migration is often unwanted and unintended by these individuals. An article in the UK's *Reuters* (Pawlak and Sobczak 2016) reports that less than six percent of Poles said that the Brexit vote meant they wanted to go back to Poland. Almost 16 % said they would leave Britain but move elsewhere in the EU or outside the bloc.

A different perspective on return migration is provided by the Polish government, which – despite several programmes for return migrants – is not prepared to welcome the returnees yet (Szczepański N.d.). Szczepański (*Ibid.*) reports that most of the already developed and implemented measurements and approaches addressing Polish return migration nationwide or at the regional level do not merit attention from Polish return migrants. Instead, the government sets small incentives to attract Polish migrants to return and thus bind them to their domestic region.

Discussion

In the current European situation, brought to light by the refugee migration and the Brexit referendum, the future perspective may look desperate. In fact, at this point, not even experts can predict how the final act of Brexit and the future EU without the UK will appear. However, in a positive development for both sides, EU migration between the UK and the EU will transform and cast a serious shadow over the *free movement of*

workers as one of Europe's identification criteria. Therefore, external and internal European migration should now be on top of the European policy agenda.

In the present circumstances, it is certainly unpredictable how EU migration flows will change course in the future. Certainly, at this point, proposals should be discussed, including how EU migrants and EU citizens can be better prepared for the new Europe and the new migration flows after Brexit, as well as future external inflows from abroad. Migration experts on EU migration and labour market instruments often state that the free movement of workers is already regulated by the EU and does not need further steering at the regional, or even local, level. The authors of this article do not share this view completely. Based on the findings of this article, it is clear that the *EU free movement* needs to be redefined locally, similar to the development and implementation of new approaches for external migrants to Europe. One can argue that EU networks such as the European Employment Service (EURES) give potential EU migrants a first overview of the conditions expected in the receiving countries, job possibilities and other socioeconomic needs and so forth. Nonetheless, the approach that the authors recommend begin at the regional and local levels.

Thus, we propose the following approach. Our approach *first* focusses on the integration of EU immigrants in the community-based labour markets at home, and later in the receiving countries. *Second*, it gives potential EU migrants and other EU citizens an understanding of the European concept of the freedom of movement with all its regulations, benefits and concerns. In contrast to many other proposed approaches related to the topic, our approach emphasises *empowerment* in regards to labour market issues as the backbone of Europe's free movement. Considering integration as a mutual process, our approach posits individual empowerment as the core mechanism to achieve integration, and thus clearly distinguishes itself from the many approaches that demand EU migrants and external migrants to unilaterally adapt to already existing (job) structures in receiving countries – a concept that produced small success rates in the past. Such a process will likely be successful in establishing new structures while accounting for, and reflecting upon, existing processes and linkages between *the new and the old*.

More precisely, taking labour market integration as an example and following the understanding of empowerment, this approach identifies individuals' (*i.e*., EU migrants) competencies as a starting point for targeted integration measures. The overall aim is to equip these target groups for integration in the local – and later transnational – European job market and to prepare them for an independent living and working life in transnational spaces.

This can be achieved through an innovative threefold approach of *employability* (*i.e*., increasing the target groups' ability to search and find a job by themselves and knowing whom to contact for further help and information in the domestic and the receiving country), *entrepreneurship* (*i.e*., increase of target groups' entrepreneurial activities, not solely in the sense of starting a business, but to be self-manageable and organised in all manners) and *mobility knowledge* (*i.e*., increase of target groups' knowledge on successful and failed mobility, European rights, *does and don'ts* and preparation to become EU citizens).

Also, other concepts in the field located at the community level focus primarily on specific information, qualification recognition and further education possibilities of the target groups. This approach identifies community-based labour market (branches and sectors) needs and translates these into empowerment measures for EU immigrants,

helping them to understand and harness their possibilities and chances in the light of their competencies. As used here, *raising employability* is not about preparing someone to match to a specific job offer somewhere in Europe, but providing potential EU migrants with the skills and capabilities necessary to engage in the labour market and fully participate in and contribute to community life everywhere across Europe. Also, *entrepreneurial skills* and attitudes empower the EU migrants to act independently with sole responsibility for self-development and self-employment. It can, in the best case, lead to immigrant entrepreneurial activities and starting a business in the domestic region after the return. *Mobility knowledge* for potential migrants and further groups of EU citizens, on the other hand, is crucial to ensure cohesion in the society, active citizens, sustainable growth and increased employment in Europe. This approach, adapted in any form, could already make up parts of a school's or university's curriculum across Europe. In doing so, individuals' empowerment and independent life approaches would support a united European society.

Conclusion

While long underestimated, the Brexit referendum has shown that EU migration (free movement of workers) and refugee migration give rise to controversy all over Europe. Regardless of the real impact, EU citizens who perceive the latest immigration flows as endangering their situation, including far-reaching implications for daily life, can be found throughout Europe. An accompanying fear and insecurity for the future are reflected in the number of national referendums and the growing popularity of right-wing parties. However, migration is no new phenomenon for Europe and is even expected to increase in the coming decades. Considering demographic changes or the potential for innovation through diversity migration is likely to provide a positive impact for the society if Europe's integration strategies succeed. One reason for the resentment of parts of the population can be attributed to the integration of refugees into EU societies and labour markets (see past developments and experiences), which, at the same time, is a symptom of missed opportunities and European divergence. The division in society is widening between people who support and those who oppose diversity and pluralisation: in other words, EU citizens who feel free and enjoy the idea of the EU and free movement and those who are afraid of open borders and loss of identity.

Hence, the challenge for researchers and practitioners in Europe is to develop and implement solutions that bridge the gap between EU citizens, potential internal EU migrants and 'foreigners', and that empower people to sense and seize opportunities for a common future. In this context, the role of policy is to stimulate and sustain related to concepts by establishing the necessary framework and conditions for internal European migration and external migration flows to Europe by raising individual empowerment.

NOTES

[1] Huguenots is the common term since 1560 for French Protestants in the pre-revolutionary France. Their confession was strongly influenced by Calvinism, thus the teaching of John Calvin.

[2] The *'ENTER – Enter to Entrepreneurship' under the ERASMUS+ of the EU* was partnered by the Boston college (UK) with cooperation of the Polish city Radomsko and the German Institute for Work and Technology (GER).

[3] Miasto Radomsko (PL); Boston College (UK); Institute for Work and Technology, Westphalian University (GER), *Guide Book 'ENTER – Enter to Entrepreneurship',* The project 'ENTER – ENTER to Entrepreneurship' is funded by the European Commission under the program ERASMUS+, Key Action 2, May 2016.

[4] GUS stands for Główny UrząD Statystyczny – Central Statistical Office.

[5] *Selma: Selektivität und Mehrdeutigkeit in Arbeitskulturen – Eine Ressourcen- und potenzialorientierte Gestaltung der Arbeitswelt für Flüchtlinge in den Branchen Altenpflege, IT-Wirtschaft und Bauhandwerk,* A project funded by the Ministry of Culture and Research of North Rhine Westphalia, lead by the Institute for Work and Technology, Westphalian University in cooperation with the Institut für Stadtgeschichte Gelsenkirchen and the Forschungsinstitut für innovative Arbeitsgestaltung und Prävention e.V.

[6] IAB, *Flüchtlinge und andere Migranten am deutschen Arbeitsmarkt: Der Stand im September 2015*. IAB – Institut für Arbeitsmarkt und Berufsforschung, 14/2015.

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