



FULL REPORT

MIGRATION AND INTEGRATION: AN ANALYSIS OF THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC BENEFITS OF MIGRANT INCLUSION IN EUROPE, THE MEDITERRANEAN, AND GREECE

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Introduction

Migration, to say the least, is a fraught subject in Europe. Hungarian Prime Minister Victor Orbán, in 2016, referred to migration as “not a solution but a problem... not medicine but a poison.”¹ Orbán even went so far as to say “every single migrant poses a public security and terror risk.”² But Orban, though far-right, is far from the only European leader to doubt the benefits of migration. German Chancellor Frederick Merz recently characterized migration — of which his country has experienced significant waves in past decades — as a “problem” to be mitigated.³ Unfortunately, the views of these leaders represent anything but an isolated viewpoint. In European political culture — in conservative and liberal leaning circles alike — it has become commonplace to regard migration as an undesirable affliction rather than a social reality necessitating careful governance to ensure that it jointly benefits both the receiving country as well as the migrants themselves.

This problematization of migration is particularly common in the political culture of Mediterranean states, notably Greece and Italy. Situated at the front lines of migration routes, these countries must manage the processing and housing of migrants, the resultant drain on their public funds, the anxieties of their populaces, and the very pressing concern of their humanitarian obligations. Yet the research reviewed in this

¹ Lara Davis, “The Unexamined Securitization of Economic Migrants,” *EuropeNow*, October 2, 2018, <https://www.europenowjournal.org/2018/09/01/the-unexamined-securitization-of-economic-migrants/>.

² Davis, “Unexamined Securitization of Economic Migrants.”

³ European Council on Refugees and Exiles, “Germany: Merz under Fire for ‘Racist’ Comment—Government Possibly Close to Deportation Deal with Taliban—Coalition Disagreement over Deportation Centres—Parliament Votes to Scrap Fast-Track Citizenship—Council of Europe Visit Focused on Migration and Asylum,” October 23, 2025, <https://ecre.org/germany-merz-under-fire-for-racist-comment-%E2%80%95-government-possibly-close-to-deportation-deal-with-taliban-%E2%80%95-coalition-disagreement-over-deportation-centres-%E2%80%95-p/>.

report demonstrates that migration need not be a burden to receiving countries — or solely a burden to them. The Harvard Undergraduate Foreign Policy Initiative's Research reveals that when migrants and refugees are given access to regularized legal status, job training that prepares them to assume employment in sectors with labor shortages, housing, language education, and psychological support and cultural bonding opportunities, migration can revitalize the economics and cultures of the receiving countries. The benefits of migration are not passively unlocked, and the extent to which a host country is able to benefit from migration depends upon the quality of its integration systems. This report will discuss strategies for building a high quality integration system: that includes evaluating a country's labor needs and adjusting migrant training and selection to best serve them. It also includes understanding that granting legal status, education opportunities, psychological support, and fostering cultural bonding help prevent criminal behavior and foster social camaraderie. Our report's underlying thesis is that strategic integration — meaning integration that is attentive to the skillsets, traits, and circumstances of the migrants as well as of the host country's economy and culture transforms migration from a burden into a boon.

Indeed, migration can help Europe, the Mediterranean, and Greece in particular adapt to aging populations, diminishing workforces, increased pressure on the country's welfare and pensions systems, labor shortages, a decline in the populations of rural communities, and other fiscal difficulties. It can also support essential industries such as agriculture, tourism, and healthcare. Finally, it can strengthen the receiving country's social life through its infusion of diversity and facilitation of intercultural exchange.

There is already ample research to suggest that to enjoy these benefits, a country must do more than merely institute emergency reception protocols or attempt deterrence: they must instead design integration policy with the aim of incorporating migrants long term. Regarding their potential to contribute to the economy, evidence from the International Monetary Fund, the Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development, and other migration scholarships suggests that migrants — provided they can work legally and quickly — have addressed labor shortages in critical sectors and increased economic output.⁴ In the European Union, in fact, recent immigration has helped stabilize demographic decline and alleviate labor shortages, particularly in the years following the COVID-19 pandemic and Russia’s invasion of Ukraine.⁵ Between 2019 and 2023, a significant share of new jobs in the EU were filled by non-EU citizens, illustrating that migrants have helped sustain employment growth during a period of demographic stress and geopolitical uncertainty.⁶

At the same time, the social benefits of migration are often obscured by public narratives like these ones cited at the beginning of this report. Such narratives

⁴ Migration into the EU: Stocktaking of Recent Developments and Macroeconomic Implications.” *IMF*, 27 Sept. 2024, www.imf.org/en/Publications/WP/Issues/2024/09/27/Migration-into-the-EU-Stocktaking-of-Recent-Developments-and-Macroeconomic-Implications-555578. Migration into the EU: Stocktaking of Recent Developments And, www.imf.org/-/media/Files/Publications/WP/2024/English/wpia2024211-print-pdf.ashx. Accessed 6 Apr. 2026.

⁵ “Migration into the EU: Stocktaking of Recent Developments and Macroeconomic Implications.” *IMF*, 27 Sept. 2024, www.imf.org/en/Publications/WP/Issues/2024/09/27/Migration-into-the-EU-Stocktaking-of-Recent-Developments-and-Macroeconomic-Implications-555578.

⁶ Migration into the EU: Stocktaking of Recent Developments and Macroeconomic Implications.” *IMF*, 27 Sept. 2024, www.imf.org/en/Publications/WP/Issues/2024/09/27/Migration-into-the-EU-Stocktaking-of-Recent-Developments-and-Macroeconomic-Implications-555578. Migration into the EU: Stocktaking of Recent Developments And, www.imf.org/-/media/Files/Publications/WP/2024/English/wpia2024211-print-pdf.ashx. Accessed 6 Apr. 2026.

frequently frame migrants as threats to cultural cohesion, welfare systems, wages, or public safety.⁷ Literature on public attitudes toward migration shows that negative perceptions are shaped not only by material concerns but also by psychology, including fears about identity.⁸ When migrants and refugees are branded the “outgroup,” their regularization in their receiving country can become an existential threat to groups’ notions of identity.⁹ But these narratives must not be relied upon as genuine assessments of migration’s impact on society. Empirical research repeatedly shows that when inclusion is strategically promoted, migrants become best equipped to contribute to the communities receiving them.

At the heart of the debate over migration is Greece, a country which occupies a uniquely exposed position in European migration governance. Since 2015, Greece has been the arrival point for around 46% of more than 2.8 million undocumented migrants entering Europe.¹⁰ The country sits at the intersection of conflicting obligations: EU border agency duties, international refugee law, and its own increasingly restrictive domestic legislation. Once merely a transit point, Greece has evolved to become both a key point of entry into the EU and a country of longer-term residence for migrants. This

⁷ Maykel Verkuyten, “Public Attitudes Towards Migrants: Understanding Cross-National and Individual Differences,” *World Psychiatry Association*, 2021, 1, <https://doi.org/10.1002/wps.20819>. Jens Hainmueller and Daniel Hopkins, “Public Attitudes Toward Immigration,” *Annual Review of Political Science*, 2014, 227, <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-polisci-102512-194818>. Heaven Crawley and Dimitris Skleparis, “Refugees, Migrants, Neither, Both: Categorical Fetishism and the Politics of Bounding in Europe’s ‘Migration Crisis,’” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 2018, 2, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2017.1348224>. Scott Page, *The Difference: How the Power of Diversity Creates Better Groups, Firms, Schools, and Societies* (Princeton University Press, n.d.), 26, <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt7sp9c>.

⁸ Maykel Verkuyten, “Public Attitudes Towards Migrants: Understanding Cross-National and Individual Differences,” *World Psychiatry Association*, 2021, 1, <https://doi.org/10.1002/wps.20819>.

⁹ Maykel Verkuyten, “Public Attitudes Towards Migrants: Understanding Cross-National and Individual Differences,” *World Psychiatry Association*, 2021, 1, <https://doi.org/10.1002/wps.20819>.

¹⁰ John T. Psaropoulos, “Greece’s Expansive Refugee Deportation Law Tests Limits of Rights in EU,” *Al Jazeera*, September 25, 2025, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/9/25/greeces-expansive-refugee-deportation-law-tests-limits-of-rights-in-eu>.

has presented a burden for the country still struggling to offload its debt. But it also presents an opportunity it cannot afford to overlook.

Recent demographic and labor trends have increased the urgency of integrating migrants into Greek society. Greece faces severe demographic pressure: low fertility, an aging population, a decline in its rural populations, and a shrinking labor force.¹¹ Further, labor shortages in industries like agriculture, tourism, and healthcare work suggest that migrant inclusion could become a crucial part of alleviating economic burdens and injecting new rigor into the economy.

A few case studies offer lessons regarding the most advantageous integration strategies and their importance.

Italy offers a cautionary Mediterranean case study. Migrant workers are central to Italian agriculture — especially in seasonal sectors such as olive growing and viticulture — which supplies tens of billions of euros to the Italian economy and is the third largest agricultural industry in Europe.¹² One article describes migrant workers as forming the “backbone,” of the industry.¹³ Thus, migrant workers form a crucial part of the Italian GDP and are vital to an industry that sustains not only Italy but Europe as a whole.

¹¹ Ioannis E. Kotoulas, “Greece Political Briefing: Greece’s Demographic Crisis as an Existential Threat,” *China-CEE Institute*, October 31, 2024, <https://china-cee.eu/2024/10/31/greece-political-briefing-greeces-demographic-crisis-as-an-existential-threat/>.

¹² Migration Policy Institute, “Trapped by Italy’s Policy Paradox: Asylum Seekers and Other Migrants Can Fall into Exploitative Farm Labor,” August 21, 2024, <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/italy-migrant-farmworker-exploitation>.

¹³ Migration Policy Institute, “Trapped by Italy’s Policy Paradox.”

Yet Italian integration policy also offers lessons in its pitfalls: irregular status, restrictive policies, and dependence on employers can trap migrants in exploitative labor conditions. Italy's example reveals that an economy may depend on migrant labor while politically excluding the same workers who are so crucial to the country's development. Even more vulnerable than they were previously due to deregulation policies, migrant workers in Italy frequently fall into the hands of gangs who continue to exploit them.¹⁴ And further, the disincentive to migrate legally perpetuates the system of illegality which brings along with it the increased opportunity for further human rights abuses. Aside from resulting in human rights abuses — which are socially disadvantageous for the country — the de-regularization of migrants also has proven harmful to its economy. Food prices rise, creating a drag on the Italian economy, as a result of the reduced food production.¹⁵ A rise in food prices, in addition to placing stress on the Italian consumer, also creates inflationary concerns, which puts downward pressure on the Italian economy as a whole. Thus legal exclusion is economically deleterious.

Germany provides a contrasting model to Italy. Since it received a large influx of migrants in 2015, Germany has invested more heavily in language courses, vocational training, and other programs to boost the labor prospects of its migrants than many of its European counterparts.¹⁶ As a result, refugee employment has risen significantly over

¹⁴ Migration Policy Institute, "Trapped by Italy's Policy Paradox."

¹⁵ Migration Policy Centre, "The Politics of Regularisation of Migrant Labour in Italy," May 22, 2020, <https://migrationpolicycentre.eu/politics-regularisation-migrant-labour-italy>.

¹⁶ European Commission, "OECD Report Germany: Status of Immigrant Integration," *Migration and Home Affairs*, July 8, 2024, https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/whats-new/publications/oecd-report-germany-status-immigrant-integration_en. Herbert Brücker, "Drivers of Employment Growth: An Overview of the Integration of Migrants into the German Labour Market," *IAB-Forum*, July 31, 2025, <https://iab-forum.de/en/drivers-of-employment-growth-an-overview-of-the-integration-of-migrants-into-the-german-labour-market/>. Ricardo Martinez Moya, "Labor Market Integration of Refugees: Improved

time, and migrants have helped alleviate labor shortages in healthcare, logistics, manufacturing, and other sectors.¹⁷ However, the German case study also reveals additional pitfalls in integration strategy. Because the German integration strategy was not adequately attentive to its economy's specific labor needs, the country expended resources training migrants only to find that many were overqualified for the jobs they entered — which were concentrated in lower skilled roles.¹⁸ Thus, employment training for migrants as well as admission criteria must be tailored to the country's labor needs in order for integration to be economically beneficial to the host country.

The Harvard Undergraduate Foreign Policy Initiative has conducted this research with the guidance and mentorship of SolidarityNow, a Greek non-profit and humanitarian organization, founded in 2013 to respond to the needs of the most vulnerable and marginalized groups. Through SolidarityNow's programs and the programs that it supports such as HELIOS, HELIOS+, ESTIA, child and family support hubs, education initiatives, unaccompanied minor support, legal assistance, psychosocial care, and youth empowerment, the organization demonstrates a strong belief in that fact that holistic efforts to invest in and integrate migrants benefit society as a whole.

Institutional Settings Promote Employment," *Institute for Employment Research (IAB)*, July 25, 2024, <https://iab.de/en/labor-market-integration-of-refugees-improved-institutional-settings-promote-employment>. Jens Hainmueller et al., "Refugee Labor Market Integration at Scale: Evidence from Germany's Fast-Track Employment Program," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 123, no. 14 (2026): e2513863123, <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2513863123>. Elsa Conesa, "Ten Years after the Migration Crisis, Germany Assesses Merkel's 'Wir Schaffen Das' Legacy," *Le Monde*, August 31, 2025, https://www.lemonde.fr/en/international/article/2025/08/31/ten-years-after-the-migration-crisis-germany-assesses-merkel-s-wir-schaffen-das-legacy_6744895_4.html.

¹⁷ European Commission, "OECD Report Germany: Status of Immigrant Integration," *Migration and Home Affairs*, July 8, 2024, https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/whats-new/publications/oecd-report-germany-status-immigrant-integration_en/

¹⁸ OECD, *Labour Market Integration of Refugees in Germany: Finding Their Way* (Paris: OECD Publishing, 2017), <https://doi.org/10.1787/14947519-en>.

The report concludes with several recommendations for SolidarityNow to deepen its role as an engine of integration, among them: expanding partnerships with employers, developing migrant mentorship programs documenting rights violations, developing migrant storytelling campaigns, hosting block parties to foster intercultural bonding, and more.

Our research demonstrates that migration can be socially and economically beneficial when receiving societies build integration institutions which are tailored to their economic needs. SolidarityNow is uniquely positioned to play a role in that essential integration effort.

Part I: Understanding Migration as an Ingrained Political Reality

In recent decades, migration has become a defining political question for the European Union, and especially for the Mediterranean. Greece, Italy, Spain, Cyprus, and Malta constitute the geographic front line of maritime migration routes, while northern and western states such as Germany, the Netherlands, and Sweden have often become longer-term destinations for migrants to seek employment, asylum, or family settlement.

The debate waged in response to this increase in migration often frames it as a burden: a source of fiscal cost and cultural tension. These concerns cannot simply be dismissed; sudden arrivals do indeed place pressure on local services, especially in under-resourced municipalities and housing shortages can be exacerbated by an influx of migrants, and schools and healthcare facilities may struggle. Yet the evidence reviewed in this report demonstrates that these problems are not inherent to migration

itself, but rather, the result of policy choices which systemically exclude migrants, failing to view them as potential long-term contributors to society. When migrants are denied legal status, segregated in camps, excluded from education, or subjected to discrimination, the host country forfeits the social and economic benefits of migration. But when migrants are integrated early, supported through language and skills programs, connected with employers, protected from exploitation, and included in community life, they become assets to the country, capable of addressing some of its most urgent challenges.

Migrant integration is not merely a moral obligation but a national development strategy; moral because migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers possess fundamental rights and human dignity; and pragmatic because Europe faces demographic decline and labor shortages that cannot be solved without expanding participation in social and economic life. Strategic integration turns migration from an ostensible emergency into a source of shared prosperity.

Part II: Terminology

Before proceeding, a clear definition of key terms is necessary, especially given that public debate often collapses legally distinct categories into “the migrant.” We have adopted the definition used in Balza’s 2024 discussion of the economic impacts of immigration in the European Union, which reads that, “an asylum seeker is a person seeking international protection whose claim for refugee status has not yet been determined.”¹⁹ A refugee, under the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees,

¹⁹ Bogusław Balza, “Exploring the Economic Impacts of Immigration in European Union: Opportunities, Challenges, and Legal Implications,” *European Research Studies Journal* 27, no. 4 (2024): 648–57, <https://doi.org/10.35808/ersj/3541>

is a person who has left their country of origin because of a well-founded fear of persecution on the basis of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion.²⁰ The broader term migrant refers to a person who moves across borders whether from work, family reunification, education, protection, or improved living conditions.²¹

These distinctions carry legal weight; refugees and beneficiaries of international protection may have rights to residence as well as employment, education, and social protection that differ from those of asylum seekers or other foreign nationals; labor migrants may enter through seasonal work, student, family reunification, or employer-sponsored pathways; undocumented migrants may lack formal status even when they perform essential work.²²

At the same time, these categories can distort meaning. Crawley and Skleparis argue that the distinction between “refugee” and “migrant” is politically loaded.²³ Labels influence who is perceived as legitimate and non-threatening. The term “refugee” may evoke sympathy as it suggests the individual's displacement was coerced rather than voluntary, while “economic migrants” are often treated as less deserving, even when

²⁰ Bogusław Balza, “Exploring the Economic Impacts of Immigration in European Union: Opportunities, Challenges, and Legal Implications,” *European Research Studies Journal* 27, no. 4 (2024): 648–57, <https://doi.org/10.35808/ersj/3541>

²¹ Bogusław Balza, “Exploring the Economic Impacts of Immigration in European Union: Opportunities, Challenges, and Legal Implications,” *European Research Studies Journal* 27, no. 4 (2024): 648–57, <https://doi.org/10.35808/ersj/3541>

²² Bogusław Balza, “Exploring the Economic Impacts of Immigration in European Union: Opportunities, Challenges, and Legal Implications,” *European Research Studies Journal* 27, no. 4 (2024): 648–57, <https://doi.org/10.35808/ersj/3541>

²³ Bogusław Balza, “Exploring the Economic Impacts of Immigration in European Union: Opportunities, Challenges, and Legal Implications,” *European Research Studies Journal* 27, no. 4 (2024): 648–57, <https://doi.org/10.35808/ersj/3541>

their movement is propelled by extreme poverty or political instability.²⁴ This report therefore uses the relevant legal categories when necessary while recognizing that integration requires acute attention to each individual's circumstances.

Part III: Europe's Demographic and Labor Market Challenge

Europe's demographics make it particularly amenable to migration. As it suffers writ large from pressures including fewer available workers and more retirees, its healthcare services and pension and welfare systems have experienced strain.²⁵ Migration can aid in mitigating these challenges by injecting new laborers into the workforce that max tax contributions and bolster the state's welfare systems.

Research conducted by the IMF reinforces this; migration into the EU reached historically high levels in 2022 and remained above pre-pandemic levels in 2023. This increased migration helped meet strong labor demand during a period when unemployment among EU citizens remained low.²⁶ In fact, the IMF found that between 2019 and 2023, around two-thirds of jobs created in the EU were filled by non-EU

²⁴ Bogusław Balza, "Exploring the Economic Impacts of Immigration in European Union: Opportunities, Challenges, and Legal Implications," *European Research Studies Journal* 27, no. 4 (2024): 648–57, <https://doi.org/10.35808/ersj/3541>

²⁵ Migration into the EU: Stocktaking of Recent Developments and Macroeconomic Implications." *IMF*, 27 Sept. 2024, www.imf.org/en/Publications/WP/Issues/2024/09/27/Migration-into-the-EU-Stocktaking-of-Recent-Developments-and-Macroeconomic-Implications-555578. Migration into the EU: Stocktaking of Recent Developments And, www.imf.org/-/media/Files/Publications/WP/2024/English/wpia2024211-print-pdf.ashx. Accessed 6 Apr. 2026.

²⁶ Migration into the EU: Stocktaking of Recent Developments and Macroeconomic Implications." *IMF*, 27 Sept. 2024, www.imf.org/en/Publications/WP/Issues/2024/09/27/Migration-into-the-EU-Stocktaking-of-Recent-Developments-and-Macroeconomic-Implications-555578. Migration into the EU: Stocktaking of Recent Developments And, www.imf.org/-/media/Files/Publications/WP/2024/English/wpia2024211-print-pdf.ashx. Accessed 6 Apr. 2026.

citizens.²⁷ This data should not be misinterpreted to suggest that migrants “took” jobs from native workers; rather, it suggests that migrants helped fill real labor demand at a time when employers faced shortages and demographic constraints. Migrants are thus critical to building economic resilience.

The economic importance of migration is especially salient in certain sectors. In seasonal work, employers rely on laborers with time flexibility, who are frequently migrants. The agriculture, tourism, and domestic care industries all also rely heavily on migrant workers, as these positions often pay lower-wages and might be physically demanding. Further as its population ages and continues to turn away from careers in agriculture, Europe will be more reliant than ever upon migrant workers. It must be noted that migrants also perform high-skilled labor that is of great importance to Europe as well.

The specific skillsets that are most useful to the receiving country depend upon the labor needs to the receiving country. Through an integration policy that regularizes the status of migrants and trains them to respond to the country’s labor market needs, Europe can manage its labor shortages and boost its economy.

Part IV: Economic Benefits of Migration in Europe

²⁷ Migration into the EU: Stocktaking of Recent Developments and Macroeconomic Implications.” *IMF*, 27 Sept. 2024, www.imf.org/en/Publications/WP/Issues/2024/09/27/Migration-into-the-EU-Stocktaking-of-Recent-Developments-and-Macroeconomic-Implications-555578. Migration into the EU: Stocktaking of Recent Developments And, www.imf.org/-/media/Files/Publications/WP/2024/English/wpia2024211-print-pdf.ashx. Accessed 6 Apr. 2026.

Thus, migration benefits European economies through several avenues. The first and most direct is cited above, labor supply. Migrants fill positions that might otherwise remain vacant. This allows businesses to maintain and expand production. In sectors such as agriculture and hospitality, labor shortages can have immediate effects on production, prices, and competitiveness of the industry and the economy writ large. In sectors such as healthcare and especially elder care, migrants directly affect the social welfare of the country.

Second, migrants contribute to public finances through taxes and social contributions. The OECD's research on the economic impact of migration emphasizes that immigrants often contribute more in taxes and social contributions than governments spend on them, especially when immigrants are employed and unemployment is low.²⁸ Public debate is wrong to overemphasize the cost of managing migration, as it overlooks the fiscal contribution migrants make once included into the formal economy.

Third, migration supports demographic health. Migrants, who tend to be younger and of working age, can inject new economic potential into aging societies like Greece by contributing to the working-age population and bolstering pension programs. In Greece, and Spain, which are experiencing decline in their more rural regions, migrants can also help repopulate those areas. Migration can help sustain communities that might otherwise bleed the talent they desperately need.

²⁸ Migration into the EU: Stocktaking of Recent Developments and Macroeconomic Implications." *IMF*, 27 Sept. 2024, www.imf.org/en/Publications/WP/Issues/2024/09/27/Migration-into-the-EU-Stocktaking-of-Recent-Developments-and-Macroeconomic-Implications-555578. Migration into the EU: Stocktaking of Recent Developments And, www.imf.org/-/media/Files/Publications/WP/2024/English/wpia2024211-print-pdf.ashx. Accessed 6 Apr. 2026.

Fourth, migration can increase productivity and innovation. Scott Page’s work on diversity argues that different perspectives can be brought to bear on a problem when the voices contributing to it are diverse.²⁹ Migration creates intercultural bonds that link host economies with countries of origin through trade, investment, language skills, and cultural knowledge, which are mutually enriching.

Fifth, migrants contribute as consumers and entrepreneurs. Migrant households purchase goods and services, rent homes, use transportation, and participate in local economies.³⁰ Many migrants also start businesses, especially in food, retail, construction, domestic services, and cross-border trade. Especially in regions experiencing population decline, migrant entrepreneurship can re-invigorate the commercial life of the community.

However, these benefits are contingent upon migrants working legally and safely. A person prevented from working by legal barriers cannot contribute fully to public finances. And productivity losses accrue when migrants who are not regularized work in informal avenues, as they are not recorded. Legal integration is therefore becoming increasingly crucial to Europe’s economic success.

Part V: Mythbusting: Wages, Social Welfare, and Crime

Migration debates often center on three concerns: wage pressure, social welfare strain, and crime. Carefully considered evidence refutes or diminishes the severity of these concerns.

²⁹ Scott E. Page, “Making the Difference: Applying a Logic of Diversity,” *Academy of Management Perspectives* 21, no. 4 (November 2007): 6–20, <https://doi.org/10.5465/amp.2007.27895335>.

³⁰ OECD, *The Contribution of Migration to Regional Development*, OECD Regional Development Studies (Paris: OECD Publishing, 2022), <https://doi.org/10.1787/57046df4-en>.

On wages, research generally finds that the effects of migration are not uniformly negative. Migrants may compete with some native workers in particularly low-wage sectors, but migrants tend to fill jobs that appear less desirable to natives, supporting business expansion, and increasing demand for goods and services. In economies which are in particular need of low skilled labor, such as Greece, supporting migrants through training or selection mechanisms aligned with labor market needs is a crucial strategy.

On welfare systems, research finds that migration can increase the demands placed upon a country's healthcare, education, and housing, especially when arrivals are unexpected. But strain on the welfare system is not an inherent outcome of migration. It can in fact be mitigated by investing in capacity for hospitals, schools, and housing. And this mitigation is worthwhile as it creates the conditions for migrants to become full-fledged participants in social and economic life rather than continuous burdens.

And on crime, Balza's analysis of Germany after the 2016 immigration exposes the frequent skewing of crime statistics. Migrants may appear overrepresented in certain data, but such statistics often fail to adjust for age, gender, socioeconomic conditions, housing and legal status and access to employment.³¹ Migrant populations are often younger and male in greater proportion than the general population and they may face difficult living conditions that predispose them to crime.³² Thus, the correct conclusion to draw from these statistics is not that migrants are inherently more likely to commit crimes but that external factors which shape the composition of the migrant

³¹ Bogusław Balza, "Exploring the Economic Impacts of Immigration in European Union: Opportunities, Challenges, and Legal Implications," *European Research Studies Journal* 27, no. 4 (2024): 648–57, <https://doi.org/10.35808/ersj/354>.

³² Bogusław Balza, "Exploring the Economic Impacts of Immigration in European Union: Opportunities, Challenges, and Legal Implications," *European Research Studies Journal* 27, no. 4 (2024): 648–57, <https://doi.org/10.35808/ersj/3541>

population as well as the conditions in which they live may increase the likelihood of crime. Luckily, living and working conditions are ones which the host country can regulate in order to make migrants the best contributors to society that they can be. Thus, integration is a crime-prevention tactic as well as a beneficial social policy.

Part VI: Contending with Harmful Public Narratives

Migrants and refugees often contribute to labor markets and communities, yet they are publicly framed as threats in media and everyday conversation. Literature on public attitudes toward migration demonstrates that negative perceptions are shaped just as much by actual economic competition than by psychological concerns about identity and belonging. In particular, Verkuyten finds that concerns about cultural integration and identity preservation are among the strongest predictors of negative attitudes towards migrants.³³ Hainmueller and Hopkins similarly show that public attitudes toward immigration are often shaped by fears of cultural shock rather than solely by economic interests.³⁴ Social identity theory offers an explanation for this

³³ Maykel Verkuyten, "Public Attitudes Towards Migrants: Understanding Cross-National and Individual Differences," *World Psychiatry Association*, 2021, 1, <https://doi.org/10.1002/wps.20819>. Jens Hainmueller and Daniel Hopkins, "Public Attitudes Toward Immigration," *Annual Review of Political Science*, 2014, 227, <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-polisci-102512-194818>. Heaven Crawley and Dimitris Skleparis, "Refugees, Migrants, Neither, Both: Categorical Fetishism and the Politics of Bounding in Europe's 'Migration Crisis,'" *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 2018, 2, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2017.1348224>. Scott Page, *The Difference: How the Power of Diversity Creates Better Groups, Firms, Schools, and Societies* (Princeton University Press, n.d.), 26, <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt7sp9c>.

³⁴ Maykel Verkuyten, "Public Attitudes Towards Migrants: Understanding Cross-National and Individual Differences," *World Psychiatry Association*, 2021, 1, <https://doi.org/10.1002/wps.20819>. Jens Hainmueller and Daniel Hopkins, "Public Attitudes Toward Immigration," *Annual Review of Political Science*, 2014, 227, <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-polisci-102512-194818>. Heaven Crawley and Dimitris Skleparis, "Refugees, Migrants, Neither, Both: Categorical Fetishism and the Politics of Bounding in Europe's 'Migration Crisis,'" *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 2018, 2, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2017.1348224>. Scott Page, *The Difference: How the Power of Diversity Creates Better Groups, Firms, Schools, and Societies* (Princeton University Press, n.d.), 26, <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt7sp9c>.

pattern: migrants are frequently categorized as outgroup members and thus perceived as culturally distant and threatening.³⁵

Refugees occupy a more ambivalent position than migrants. As was referred to in the terminology section, Crawley and Skleparis argue that categories such as “refugee” and “migrant” are politically constructed and influence perceptions of legitimacy. The term “refugee” may evoke sympathy because it suggests forced displacement, but this sympathy is often accompanied by concerns about the cost of integration.³⁶

While this report has considered evidence refuting common arguments about the benefits or lack thereof of immigration, the importance of storytelling in combating negative public perceptions of migrants — psychological as well as economic ones — is outlined next. Studies show that people are often more emotionally moved by anecdotes of a specific person than by statistics about large groups.³⁷ This has important implications for migrant integration advocacy: numbers are necessary for policy credibility, but stories humanize the issue and can influence emotions, which are often the root cause of protectionist sentiment. For example, a story about refugee children learning Greek could communicate the importance of language and belonging in a much more poignant way than statistics, just as UNHCR accounts of refugees succeeding in

³⁵ Maykel Verkuyten, “Public Attitudes Towards Migrants: Understanding Cross-National and Individual Differences,” *World Psychiatry Association*, 2021, 1, <https://doi.org/10.1002/wps.20819>. Jens Hainmueller and Daniel Hopkins, “Public Attitudes Toward Immigration,” *Annual Review of Political Science*, 2014, 227, <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-polisci-102512-194818>. Heaven Crawley and Dimitris Skleparis, “Refugees, Migrants, Neither, Both: Categorical Fetishism and the Politics of Bounding in Europe’s ‘Migration Crisis,’” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 2018, 2, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2017.1348224>. Scott Page, *The Difference: How the Power of Diversity Creates Better Groups, Firms, Schools, and Societies* (Princeton University Press, n.d.), 26, <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt7sp9c>.

³⁶ Bogusław Balza, “Exploring the Economic Impacts of Immigration in European Union: Opportunities, Challenges, and Legal Implications,” *European Research Studies Journal* 27, no. 4 (2024): 648–57, <https://doi.org/10.35808/ersj/3541>

³⁷ Seyoung Lee and Thomas Hugh Feeley, “The Identifiable Victim Effect: A Meta-Analytic Review,” *Social Influence* 11, no. 3 (2016): 199–215, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15534510.2016.1216891>

Greek workplaces similarly show that integration benefits employers and society, not only the migrants themselves.

Thus, public communication should combine data with narratives that emphasize the dignity and contributions of migrants. In SolidarityNow's communication materials, migrants should be portrayed as workers, parents, students, neighbors, entrepreneurs, caregivers, and civic actors — as individuals, who once integrated into the community, can uplift it.

Part VII. Strategic Integration in Greece

Multiple events prompted Greece to transform from a transit point to a longer term country of residence for migrants. The Syrian Civil War, the rise of ISIS, instability in the Middle East, and broader displacement pattern forced Greece to accept the status of one of the primary entry points into the European Union and take on extensive responsibilities related to reception, including asylum processing and longer-term settlement.³⁸

³⁸ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, "Syrian Refugees Continue to Flee into Turkey, Humanitarian Needs Mount," September 23, 2014, <https://www.unhcr.org/uk/news/briefing-notes/syrian-refugees-continue-flee-turkey-humanitarian-needs-mount>; United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and International Organization for Migration, "A Million Refugees and Migrants Flee to Europe in 2015," December 22, 2015, <https://www.unhcr.org/news/press-releases/million-refugees-and-migrants-flee-europe-2015>. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and International Organization for Migration, "A Million Refugees and Migrants Flee to Europe in 2015"; Frontex, *Annual Risk Analysis 2016*, April 5, 2016, <https://www.frontex.europa.eu/publications/ara-2016-EZGrEA>. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Greece, "The Pre-Registration of Asylum Seekers in the Greek Mainland Is Starting Today," June 8, 2016, <https://www.unhcr.org/gr/en/news/pre-registration-asylum-seekers-greek-mainland-starting-today>; United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Greece, "The Real Challenge Is Refugee Integration," Dece

Research describes Greece as transforming from a “latecomer” on reception toward an “inspirational model” on certain asylum procedures.³⁹ Greece’s geographic position forced innovation, as its asylum system developed to better respond to land and sea border arrivals. Some maritime procedures later influenced broader European policy discussions, including elements reflected in the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum. However, Greece’s policies have also been restrictive and lacking in respect for humanitarian considerations. Illegal pushbacks, failures to prevent drownings, and other practices are certainly a stain upon its migration management strategy.

Karamanidou discusses some of the pressures upon Greece which led to the development of this flawed system. Greece must juggle its obligations under EU law, international refugee law, and domestic political pressure during a period of economic strain and uneven European solidarity, which has resulted in restrictive border enforcement.⁴⁰

Part VIII: Greece’s Demographic Crisis and Labor Needs

Greece’s demographic circumstances makes strategic migrant integration especially urgent. The country is grappling with low fertility, depopulation of its rural

³⁹ Angeliki Dimitriadi, “The Greek Asylum Regime: From Latecomer on Reception to Inspirational Model on Asylum Procedures,” in *Migration Control Logics and Strategies in Europe: A North-South Comparison*, ed. Claudia Finotelli and Irene Ponzio, IMISCOE Research Series (Cham: Springer, 2023), 303–21, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-26002-5_16.

OECD, *International Migration Outlook 2024* (Paris: OECD Publishing, 2024), <https://doi.org/10.1787/50b0353e-en>.

Lena Karamanidou, “Migration, Asylum Policy and Global Justice in Greece,” in *The EU Migration System of Governance: Justice on the Move*, ed. Michela Ceccorulli, Enrico Fassi, and Sonia Lucarelli (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021), 89–117, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-53997-9_4.
<https://www.bmi.bund.de/EN/topics/migration/immigration/european-harmonization/european-harmonization-node.html>

⁴⁰ Lena Karamanidou, “Migration, Asylum Policy and Global Justice in Greece,” in *The EU Migration System of Governance: Justice on the Move*, ed. Michela Ceccorulli, Enrico Fassi, and Sonia Lucarelli (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), 89–117, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-53997-9_4.

regions, and a diminishing labor force, with a total fertility rate that is below replacement level, and many regions experiencing population decline, particularly rural ones. Population projections suggest that Greece could experience substantial decline by the end of the century if current trends persist.⁴¹

The labor force is also under pressure, a significant concern as the country attempts to steer its economy back on course after decades of a financial crisis. In 2025, Greece entered its first year of labor force decline after a period of growth.⁴² The decline in those paying into tax and pension systems as well as in those available to help businesses expand is of great concern. Among the sectors most affected by labor shortages include tourism, agriculture, and healthcare work, all of which are central to the Greek economy and its growth.

Migrants may allow Greece to address these shortages, but only if Greece develops a strategic integration system. Greece must provide housing and educational support as well as stable legal pathways, language programs, and skills training, in order

⁴¹ Ioannis E. Kotoulas, "Greece Political Briefing: Greece's Demographic Crisis as an Existential Threat," *China-CEE Institute*, October 31, 2024, <https://china-cee.eu/2024/10/31/greece-political-briefing-greeces-demographic-crisis-as-an-existential-threat/>.

Statbase, "Labor Force by Gender: Greece—Yearly Data, Chart and Table," accessed June 16, 2026, <https://statbase.org/data/grc-labor-force-by-gender/>.

Roula Salourou, "Demographic Pressure on the Economy," *eKathimerini.com*, April 19, 2026, <https://www.ekathimerini.com/economy/1301241/demographic-pressure-on-the-economy/>.

PopulationPyramid.net, "Population of Greece 2024," accessed June 16, 2026, <https://www.populationpyramid.net/greece/2024/>.

Bill Giannopoulos, "Greece Confronts Labor Shortages in Tourism, Construction, and Tech Sectors," *Greek City Times*, December 10, 2024, <https://greekcitytimes.com/2024/12/10/greece-confronts-labor-shortages-in-tourism-construction-and-tech-sectors/>.

Roula Salourou, "Seeking Skilled Hands Abroad," *eKathimerini.com*, December 19, 2025, <https://www.ekathimerini.com/economy/1290136/seeking-skilled-hands-abroad/>.

⁴² Kotoulas, "Greece's Demographic Crisis." Statbase, "Labor Force by Gender." Salourou, "Demographic Pressure on the Economy." PopulationPyramid.net, "Population of Greece 2024." Giannopoulos, "Greece Confronts Labor Shortages." Salourou, "Seeking Skilled Hands Abroad."

to transform migrants into long-term residents who can build families, start businesses, pay taxes, support communities, and participate in civic life.

Part IX: Greece's Legal and Policy Framework

Greece has built a patchwork framework across many areas of migrant issues. Recent changes suggest a partial shift toward facilitating legal migration and labor market inclusion. The 2023 Migration Code allowed third-country nationals to change the purpose of their residency and employment and extended residence permits to three years, fostering long-term planning.⁴³ The 2024 Immigration Code introduced additional changes, including Digital Nomad Visa provisions, updated EU Blue Card rules, and modified work permit eligibility.⁴⁴ Former Migration Minister Dimitris Kairidis described 2024 as the “year of legal migration,” including regularization for roughly 30,000 undocumented migrants and bilateral migrations agreements with countries such as Armenia, Georgia, Moldova, Vietnam, India, and the Philippines.⁴⁵ In

⁴³ European Commission, “Pact on Migration and Asylum: A Common EU System to Manage Migration,” *Migration and Home Affairs*, May 21, 2024, https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/migration-and-asylum/pact-migration-and-asylum_en. Vincenzo Genovese, “EU Parliament Approves Controversial Bill to Increase Migrant Returns,” *Euronews*, March 26, 2026, <https://www.euronews.com/my-europe/2026/03/26/eu-parliament-approves-controversial-bill-to-increase-migrant-returns>.

Federal Ministry of the Interior, “European Harmonization of Immigration and Asylum Policy,” accessed June 16, 2026, <https://www.bmi.bund.de/EN/topics/migration/immigration/european-harmonization/european-harmonization-node.html>.

European Commission, “Migrant Integration in Greece,” *Migration and Home Affairs*, April 1, 2025, https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/migration-and-asylum/migrant-integration/migrant-integration-hub/eu-countries-updates-and-facts/migrant-integration-greece_en.

⁴⁴ Greece, Law 5275/2026, “Promotion of Legal Migration Policies, Transposition of Directive (EU) 2024/1233 on a Single Application Procedure for the Issuing to Third-Country Nationals of a Single Work and Residence Permit and on a Common Set of Rights for Third-Country Workers Residing Legally in a Member State, Amendments to the Migration Code, and Other Provisions,” *Government Gazette A* 17, February 6, 2026, Kodiko, <https://www.kodiko.gr/nomothesia/document/1279125/nomos-5275-2026>.

⁴⁵ Greece, Law 5275/2026, “Promotion of Legal Migration Policies, Transposition of Directive (EU) 2024/1233 on a Single Application Procedure for the Issuing to Third-Country Nationals of a Single Work and Residence Permit and on a Common Set of Rights for Third-Country Workers Residing Legally in a

addition, Law 5275/2026, enacted in February 2026, introduced a single application procedure for residence and work permits.⁴⁶ The law also extended EU Blue Card validity and introduced pathways such as a Tech Visa for certain startup-sector workers and post-study options for international students.⁴⁷ These reforms allowed migrant laborers to access markets, an important step forward, which indicates that Greece needs legal migration channels to meet labor and skills needs.

At the same time, Greece has moved in a more restrictive direction on irregular entry. In September 2025, parliament passed legislation increasing penalties for rejected asylum seekers, including raising detention periods, imposing fines, and reducing opportunities for long-term undocumented residents to regularize status. These changes occurred after increased arrivals to Crete and Gavdos from Libya and after a temporary suspension of asylum processing for certain arrivals from North Africa. Such measures could penalize people in need of protection as well as deprive Greece of the benefits of migrant labor. Greece's asylum framework also includes barriers to early integration. Law 4636/2019 imposed a six-month delay before asylum seekers can access the labor market. This measure prevents migrants from working creating a greater risk of dependency and exploitation, preventing access to the benefits of migration.

Member State, Amendments to the Migration Code, and Other Provisions," *Government Gazette A 17*, February 6, 2026, Kodiko, <https://www.kodiko.gr/nomothesia/document/1279125/nomos-5275-2026>.

⁴⁶ Greece, Law 5275/2026, "Promotion of Legal Migration Policies, Transposition of Directive (EU) 2024/1233 on a Single Application Procedure for the Issuing to Third-Country Nationals of a Single Work and Residence Permit and on a Common Set of Rights for Third-Country Workers Residing Legally in a Member State, Amendments to the Migration Code, and Other Provisions," *Government Gazette A 17*, February 6, 2026, Kodiko, <https://www.kodiko.gr/nomothesia/document/1279125/nomos-5275-2026>.

⁴⁷ Greece, Law 5275/2026, "Promotion of Legal Migration Policies, Transposition of Directive (EU) 2024/1233 on a Single Application Procedure for the Issuing to Third-Country Nationals of a Single Work and Residence Permit and on a Common Set of Rights for Third-Country Workers Residing Legally in a Member State, Amendments to the Migration Code, and Other Provisions," *Government Gazette A 17*, February 6, 2026, Kodiko, <https://www.kodiko.gr/nomothesia/document/1279125/nomos-5275-2026>.

Part X: Greece's Economic Opportunity: Integration as Development Strategy

Greece has already experienced firsthand the effect of failing to invest in long term reception procedures for migrants. In 2015, when Lesbos, an island in the Aegean, became one of the primary entry points into Europe, with hundreds of thousands of arrivals passing through the island, the cost of shelter, medical care, and other humanitarian support quickly mounted, with local communities bearing the brunt of it.⁴⁸

Although detractors may balk at the expenses associated with implementing proper, long term reception procedures, the crisis in 2015 reveals that they are humanitarian necessities for both the migrants and the local communities which receive them. But once again they are not merely necessities, but investments in the country's economic and social future. If the proper measures are put in place to move refugees and migrants into stable accommodation, taught the language, connected with employers, and supported in navigating legal systems, contribution potential can be fully unlocked. Since Greece's economy is growing faster than the euro area average but still facing structural challenges, including labor market shortages; provided that legal uncertainty, housing shortages, language access, and public distrust are mitigated, migration can address these crucial economic challenges and reinvigorate the country socially.

In summary, a strategic integration of migrants in Greece requires offering legal work as early as possible, ensuring that work is formal and protected by labor rights,

⁴⁸ Ben Hubbard, "Lesbos Turns From Vacation Island to 'Main Point of Entry' for Migrants," *New York Times*, September 16, 2015, <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/09/17/world/europe/lesbos-turns-from-vacation-island-to-main-point-of-entry-for-migrants.html>.

that skills should be assessed and the necessary training to fill labor shortages instituted, and that housing, childcare, transportation, language, and mental health support are provided. This basket of integration policies would ensure that migrants bolster Greece economically and that the country fulfills its humanitarian obligations.

Part XI: The Italian Case Study: A Failure in Integration

Italy provides an important comparative case for Greece because it also sits at the center of Mediterranean migration routes and relies heavily on migrant labor in particular sectors. Like Greece, Italy has received large numbers of migrants over the past decade and has implemented further restrictions in response.⁴⁹ Yet Italian agriculture depends on migrant workers, especially in the seasonal production of olive growing and viticulture.⁵⁰ Agriculture contributes tens of billions of euros to the Italian economy and is among the largest agricultural sectors in Europe, and migrant workers are often described as the backbone of this sector.⁵¹

This creates a blatant contradiction: the Italian economy depends on migrants, at the same time that political and legal systems are excluding them, degrading their political and socioeconomic potential. Migrants with precarious or irregular status are vulnerable to exploitation because their survival may depend on their employer's willingness to provide it to them. In Italy, this vulnerability has contributed to

⁴⁹ Nasibul Hoque, "Trapped by Italy's Policy Paradox, Asylum Seekers and Other Migrants Can Fall into Exploitative Farm Labor," *Migration Information Source*, Migration Policy Institute, August 21, 2024, <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/italy-migrant-farmworker-exploitation>; United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, "Italy—Situation Europe Sea Arrivals," *Operational Data Portal*, accessed June 16, 2026, <https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/europe-sea-arrivals/location/24521>

⁵⁰ Migration Policy Institute, "Trapped by Italy's Policy Paradox: Asylum Seekers and Other Migrants Can Fall into Exploitative Farm Labor," August 21, 2024, <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/italy-migrant-farmworker-exploitation>.

⁵¹ Migration Policy Institute, "Trapped by Italy's Policy Paradox."

exploitative farm labor systems, including unsafe working conditions.⁵² Restrictive migration policy also has the potential to push migrants into illegal practice or limit their ability to change employers.

The Italian case study thus demonstrates that de-regularization is economically irrational. When migrants cannot work legally, governments lose tax revenue and the fairness of the economy is disrupted. Further, exploitation depresses wages and conditions across sectors and it also makes the oppressed laborers worse contributors to the economy. It can also be the source of supply instability because if there are not sufficient agricultural laborers, production can fall leading to a rise in food prices and inflation. Thus migrant rights and legal regularization are vital to economic growth and health.

In 2020, some Italian politicians even conceded this point. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Italian policymakers temporarily recognized that undocumented migrant labor was necessary to prevent disruptions in agriculture and care work. Thus, migrant laborers fortify societies, making them more resilient when they are in crisis.

For Greece, the Italian lesson is clear: Greece should not deny the migrant laborers who are so crucial to their economy stable legal status and pathways to integration.

Part XII: The German Integration Success Story

⁵² Migration Policy Institute, “Trapped by Italy’s Policy Paradox.” Bogusław Balza, “Exploring the Economic Impacts of Immigration in European Union: Opportunities, Challenges, and Legal Implications,” *European Research Studies Journal* 27, no. 4 (2024): 648–57, <https://doi.org/10.35808/ersj/3541>

Germany offers a contrasting model to Italy. Since the influx of refugees it received in 2015, it has invested substantially in integration, including in language instruction and skills training. As a result, migrant employment increased from roughly 58% in 2005 to 69% in 2023, and refugee employment also rose significantly within six to eight years of arrival.⁵³ Germany has invested in integrating its labor force and has reaped the rewards: a strong, expanding labor force in critical sectors.

However, Germany also demonstrates the effects of a failure to strategically integrate migrants. One of its oversights was not to tailor its skills training and admission criteria to its labor needs, leaving it to still suffer from a deficiency in low skilled labor. Greece should therefore adopt Germany's strongest practices— early language support, skills training, and employer — while ensuring that these policies best serve the Greek economy.

Part XIII: The Mediterranean Media Landscape

Media coverage often depicts migrants as anonymous “flows” or security pressures rather than as people who are entitled to rights, possess important skills, and are members of families. This framing seems designed to promote deterring migration

⁵³ European Commission, “OECD Report Germany: Status of Immigrant Integration,” *Migration and Home Affairs*, July 8, 2024, https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/whats-new/publications/oecd-report-germany-status-immigrant-integration_en. Herbert Brücker, “Drivers of Employment Growth: An Overview of the Integration of Migrants into the German Labour Market,” *IAB-Forum*, July 31, 2025, <https://iab-forum.de/en/drivers-of-employment-growth-an-overview-of-the-integration-of-migrants-into-the-german-labour-market/>. Herbert Brücker, “Drivers of Employment Growth: An Overview of the Integration of Migrants into the German Labour Market,” *IAB-Forum*, July 31, 2025, <https://doi.org/10.48720/IAB.FOO.20250731.02>. Herbert Brücker, Maye Ehab, Philipp Jaschke, and Yuliya Kosyakova, “Labor Market Integration of Refugees: Improved Institutional Settings Promote Employment,” *IAB-Kurzbericht* 10/2024 (Nuremberg: Institute for Employment Research, 2024), <https://doi.org/10.48720/IAB.KB.2410.en>.

while failing to grapple with the reality that many migrants require long-term integration.

Communications in favor integration should not be dismissive of the short-term pressures migrants place on society but should reject the portrayal of migrants as threats. Anecdotes are a powerful tool for all communication; for example, children learning their host country's language, workers contributing to local firms, and families rebuilding their lives can draw attention to the benefits of inclusion and foster wholehearted integration.

Part XIV: SolidarityNow's Role in the Greek Integration Landscape

SolidarityNow's relief, empowerment, and integration model reflects the central argument of this report: migrants require immediate safety and support, and that support does not merely humanitarian constitute assistance but an investment in the migrants employment opportunities and economic potential.

Programs such as HELIOS, HELIOS+, ESTIA, education initiatives, services for unaccompanied minors, and Empower YOUTH demonstrate integration efforts must be multifaceted to succeed: including investing in skills training, language instruction, and psychosocial care.

SolidarityNow, due to its hands-on experience, is uniquely positioned to promote reforms and provide services to support Greece's handling of integration.

Part XV: Recommendations for the Social and Economic Integration of Immigrants

SolidarityNow could become further involved in promoting and sponsoring language classes, housing support, legal aid, employment services, mental healthcare, as these services are proven to increase the probability that migrants will not turn to crime and that they will be contributors to the national economy's development. Because legitimate employment provides the income, dignity, language and cultural exposure and tax contributions necessary for migrants to gain autonomy and become economic contributors, Greece should create the legal institutions to foster it. As keeping existing workers undocumented reduces tax revenue and increases exploitation, Greece should create transparent regularization pathways. These pathways should not make workers entirely dependent on employers for their legal status. Migrants should also be able to change employers without losing legal status, especially in sectors vulnerable to exploitation. SolidarityNow's communication materials could further emphasize the importance of these legal safeguards. SolidarityNow could emphasize that such services are long-term investments in the country's economic and social development.

Part XVI: Tailor Skills Training to The Country's Labor Needs

Greek-language and job training programs should include tailored instruction for workers in tourism, agriculture, and healthcare. SolidarityNow, which has already established itself as a pipeline linking migrants with employment opportunities, could also make a point of monitoring the employers it works with to gauge their compliance and success in integrating workers. For workers with vulnerable legal status, this would provide an important safeguard.

Part XVII: Strengthen Mental Health Support and Intercultural Bonding

The report further reinforces the importance of the psychological support SolidarityNow works to provide migrants. Migrants frequently experience trauma and family separation, which in addition to being personally devastating, can prevent migrants from learning and working effectively. SolidarityNow could continue to advocate that psychosocial support be integrated into housing, education, employment, and legal support networks. A particularly useful way of promoting mental health and supporting intercultural bonding are block parties, according to several journal articles.⁵⁴ Block parties foster opportunities for cross-cultural connection and camaraderie. SolidarityNow could sponsor block parties to foster the smooth integration of migrants into the country's social life.

Part XVIII: Establish a Mentorship Program to Promote Education

SolidarityNow could aid in promoting the education of migrants by assigning migrant adolescents mentors to provide them career advice and encourage them to remain in school. Education and mental health are especially important to preventing crime, promoting their well being, and ensuring they thrive in Greece.

Part XIX: Use Storytelling to Combat Xenophobia and Common Migrant Myths

SolidarityNow's communications could focus on mythbusting and, given the higher emotional capital of anecdotes. Presenting stories of migrants in their capacities as workers, students, parents, entrepreneurs, and neighbors. Narratives can emphasize

⁵⁴ Lorraine T. Dean et al., "Can You Party Your Way to Better Health? A Propensity Score Analysis of Block Parties and Health," *Social Science & Medicine* 138 (2015): 201–209, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2015.06.019>.

Nancy Stevenson, "The Street Party: Pleasurable Community Practices and Placemaking," *International Journal of Event and Festival Management* 10, no. 3 (2019): 304–318, <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJEFM-02-2019-0014>.

dignity and migrants' contribution to society rather than solely injustices they suffer and appear in the form of photo essays, podcasts, and speeches at public events.

Public relations narratives can also emphasize Greece's long tradition of accepting migrants and that its cultural heritage is largely the product of migration. Although Greece has a larger asylum-seeker population, it also has a large foreign-born population. OECD data shows that a significant share of Greece's foreign-born population has historically come from neighboring European or post-Soviet countries, particularly Albania, Georgia, and Russia.⁵⁵ Public images of migration often focus on Middle Eastern and African asylum seekers, but these groups represent only one part of Greece's overall migrant population. Migration in Greece is therefore not only a phenomenon in times of crisis but it is also and has always been a long-term feature of Greek community life, something which SolidarityNow's communication materials could remind Greeks of.

Part XX: Conclusion

Migration can help Europe and Greece address labor shortages, demographic decline, regional depopulation, and other forms of stress, but its benefits can only be repealed if integration is strategic and holistic.

Italy demonstrates the costs of relying on migrant labor while denying workers legal security. Germany demonstrates the benefits of integration efforts, while also demonstrating that migrant labor is most useful to an economy when it is designed to meet labor shortages and other economic needs. Greece therefore needs a national

⁵⁵ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, "Greece," in *International Migration Outlook 2020* (Paris: OECD Publishing, 2020), <https://doi.org/10.1787/ec98f531-en>.

strategy aligning its legal pathways, employment opportunities, and mental health services.

SolidarityNow is well equipped to support this movement. By coordinating services, expanding employer partnerships, protecting migrants' rights, supporting vulnerable youth, documenting injustices, and reshaping public narratives, it can help Greece build a society that is both more economically resilient and more just.

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