



## NEW REPORT: The European migration crisis of 2015–2016 exposed significant weaknesses in the asylum system

A new [IZA World of Labor report](#) publishing today finds reforms introduced during the migration crisis of 2015–2016 only partially address the system's glaring weaknesses. It needs a stronger shift from a regime of spontaneous asylum-seeking to one of resettling refugees directly from origin regions.

The arrival of more than two million unauthorized migrants stretched the system to its breaking point and created a public opinion backlash. The existing system is one in which migrants risk life and limb to gain (often unauthorized) entry to the EU in order to lodge claims for asylum, more than half of which are rejected.

According to Tim Hatton of the University of Essex the European asylum system suffers from weaknesses that were dramatically exposed during the migration crisis of 2015–2016. Border controls were unable to stem the flow of migrants and asylum applications fell very unevenly among EU member states. Reforms introduced in the wake of the crisis strengthened the existing system in some respects, but went only a small way toward creating a better system which would select those most in need of protection for direct resettlement without having to run the gauntlet of irregular migration and possible rejection.

Hatton finds three main issues in the pre-crisis Asylum policies, which were strongly exposed when the arrival of more than two million unauthorized migrants stretched the system to its breaking point. Firstly, over the three decades before the migration crisis only about 40% of asylum seekers were recognized as meeting the definition of a refugee. Those whose applications were rejected were legally required to leave the country, though many disappeared into the informal economy. Secondly, the so-called refugee burden was very unevenly distributed among EU countries. In the pre-crisis years 2009–2013, Germany received the largest number of applications, followed by France, Sweden, and the UK. Finally the control of the EU's external border, aimed at preventing unauthorized entry, was not functioning as it should have done.

While in the wake of the 2015/16 crisis some improvements were made, according to Hatton more needs to be done. In particular, strengthening border controls and measures for temporary protection, ensuring a more equitable distribution between countries and most importantly a more radical shift towards resettlement along the lines of the Australian/Canadian/US programs. Hatton argues: *"First, it would target those most in need of protection from persecution rather than selecting those with the initiative and wherewithal to migrate. Second, it would reduce the challenge posed by rejected asylum applicants. And third, it would be more consistent with public opinion, which is positive about genuine refugees, skeptical about economic migrants, and strongly opposed to unauthorized immigration."*

*Please credit IZA World of Labor should you refer to or cite from the report.*

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