



Patterns of Migration into Southern Europe

The United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) monitors international migration. By the end of 2013, UNHCR estimated that 51.2 million individuals were forcibly displaced worldwide as a result of persecution, conflict, generalised violence, or human rights violations. 16.7 million persons were refugees, 33.3 million were internally displaced (forced to leave their homes, but remaining within their country of origin) and 1.2 million were asylum seekers. Migration from the Middle East and Africa into Southern Europe forms part of this global pattern of international migration. In 2000, UNHCR estimated that 25,000 irregular migrants crossed into Southern Europe from the Middle East and Africa. By 2014 their annual estimate for irregular migration had increased to 130,000. The prominence of this migration in current affairs indicates the numbers may be even higher this year – by September 2015 well over 200,000.

Migration: Key Terms

Migrants are people who move their 'permanent' residence from one country to another country.

An **economic migrant** is someone who has emigrated from one region to another for better employment opportunities or an improved financial position.

A **refugee** is a person who is outside their home country because they have suffered (or feared) persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, or political opinion; because they are a member of a persecuted social category of persons; or because they are fleeing a war. Such a person may be called an "asylum seeker" until recognized by the state where they make a claim.

An **irregular migrant** is a person who enters and remains in a country without a valid visa or permit from that country, or who has overstayed the duration of a visa that has been granted, or whose visa has been cancelled.

[Source: International Organisation for Migration]

Five main themes are used to try and explain the main context in which migration occurs:

1. **Neoclassical Economic Theory** states that the most significant push/pull factors are wage differences. Therefore migration tends to flow from low-wage areas to high-wage areas.

2. **Dual Labour Market Theory** states that migration is mainly caused by pull factors in more developed countries. Migrant workers are needed to fill the lowest valued jobs because the native population does not wish to do this work.

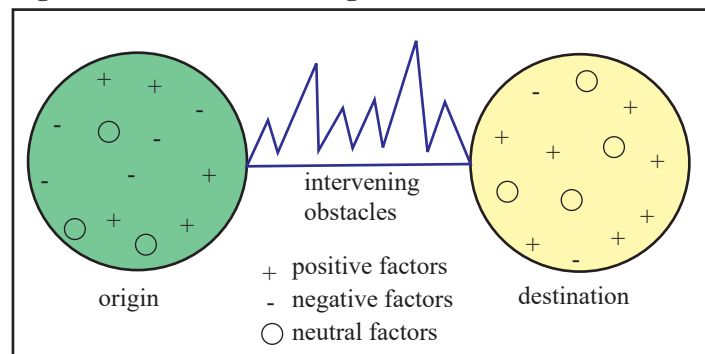
3. **The New Economics of Labour Migration** states that migration flows and patterns cannot be explained solely at the level of individual workers and the push and pull factors that incentivise migration. For example an impoverished household or wider social group can improve its condition through remittances sent back by family members who participate in migrant labour abroad.

4. Further to this, **Relative Deprivation Theory** states that awareness of the income difference between neighbours in a source community is an important factor in migration. Successful migrants may use their new affluence to provide for better schooling for their children and better homes for their families. Successful high-skilled emigrants may serve as an example for neighbours and potential migrants who hope to achieve that level of success.

5. Finally, **World Systems Theory** looks at migration from a global perspective. Trade with one country, which causes economic decline in another, may create incentives to migrate to a country with a more vibrant economy. It can be argued that even after decolonisation, the economic dependence of former colonies still remains on mother countries, encouraging migration along traditional routes. However, some disagree, arguing that free trade can reduce migration by relocating production from high wage economies to lower wage economies.

Models of migration

Figure 1. Lee's model of migration

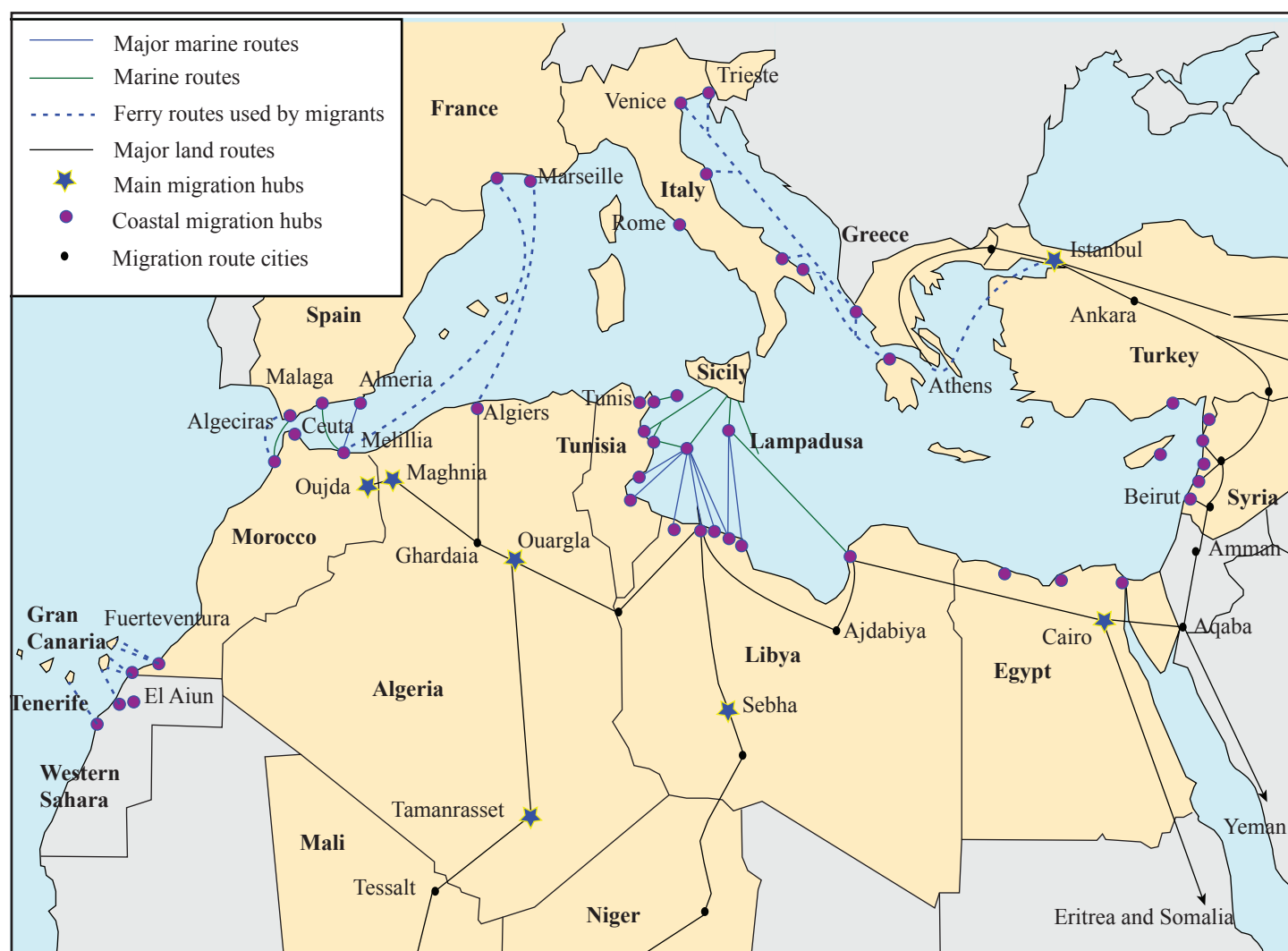


This model argues that the decision to migrate is based on a balance of positive and negative push and pull factors. If the balance of push and pull factors is sufficiently positive to justify the cost of overcoming any intervening obstacles then individuals may choose to migrate.

Migration routes

In 2004 the European Union set up Frontex, which is a body that coordinates the work of member states to secure the common borders of the European Union. As shown in Figure 2, Frontex has identified four main migration routes into Southern Europe: West Africa, Western Mediterranean, Central Mediterranean and the Eastern Mediterranean.

From 2008-2012, large numbers of migrants crossed between Turkey and Greece via the Eastern Mediterranean route. In response, Greece bolstered border controls with an additional 1,800 police officers. However, Frontex suggests that the area remains problematic, and points to "uncertainties related to the sustainability of [Greek] efforts" due to the economic crisis in the country.

Figure 2. Map of the main migration routes from the Middle East and Africa to Southern Europe

Earlier in the decade, the most popular route was from West Africa to Spain, including its North African territories of Ceuta and Melilla, and the Canary Islands, with some 32,000 irregular arrivals in 2006. This figure had dwindled to just 5,443 by 2011.

It is the central Mediterranean route that has experienced a recent surge in migrant traffic. The 2011 conflict in Libya that culminated in the downfall of Colonel Gaddafi has left Libya unstable and with weak law enforcement. People smugglers thrive in such conditions. UNHCR estimated 61,000 irregular migrants used this route in 2011 alone.

However, the campaigning organisation Human Rights Watch argues that these figures do not include an estimated 20,000 that have died attempting to migrate to southern Europe since 1998.

Push Factors at origin (source) – Middle East and Africa

The UN refugee agency reported that war in the Middle East, Africa and elsewhere had uprooted an estimated 5.5 million people during the first six months of 2014, signalling a further rise in the number of people forcibly displaced. UNHCR's "Mid-Year Trends 2014" report shows that of the 5.5 million who were newly displaced, 1.4 million fled across international borders becoming refugees, while the rest were displaced within their own countries.

Within this global picture of instability and refugee movements, certain regions are of particular importance for the migration from the Middle East and Africa across the Mediterranean to southern Europe. Many thousands of migrants arrive every year in Europe from sub-Saharan Africa, notably Eritrea and Somalia. They are fleeing economic chaos, war and human rights abuses. More recently, the numbers have been swollen by people escaping conflict and civil breakdown in Libya and Syria. More than 120,000 Syrians have arrived in Europe since 2011, according to UNHCR. This is a large number, but nonetheless a small proportion of the estimated 3 million Syrians who have fled abroad, mostly to neighbouring Jordan and Turkey. Conflict between Israel and the Palestinian National Authority together with political upheaval in Tunisia and Egypt are also displacing significant numbers of people. Figure 3. tries to summarise recent events that help explain the push factors behind this migration.

Figure 3. Timeline of political instability in Africa and the Middle East

1991		Somali Civil War
1998		Eritrean-Ethiopian War
2003		United States-organised coalition invades Iraq
2008-9		First Gaza War (Between Hamas and Israel)
2010		Tunisian Revolution
2011		Egyptian Revolution First Libyan Civil War Syrian Civil War begins Yemeni Crisis begins
2012		Federal Government of Somalia established
2013		Second Egyptian Revolution South Sudanese Civil War
2014		Second Libyan Civil War Second Gaza War

It is clear that the ethnic, religious and political conflicts mentioned in Figure 3. provide significant push factors for the migration to southern Europe. However, economic factors also play a significant role.

In 2014 Eritreans were reportedly among the most numerous of those attempting the risky crossing from North Africa to Europe by boat. According to the UNHCR, nearly 37,000 Eritreans applied for asylum in 38 European countries over the first 10 months of last year, compared with about 13,000 in the same period in 2013. It puts the total Eritrean refugee population at more than 321,000. The country profile below sets out some of the push factors that explain their decision to migrate.

Eritrea – Country Profile (Source: BBC Monitoring)

Politics: The government has been accused of repression and of hindering the development of democracy.

Human Rights: The UN has been investigating human rights in Eritrea, but its special rapporteur has been denied entry. She said in 2014 that a refugee exodus was being fuelled by alleged abuses including extrajudicial executions, torture and forced military conscription that can last decades.

Economy: Eritrea is said to be on the brink of a mining boom. It is a gold producer. Currently, it is heavily dependent on remittances. An estimated 80% work in agriculture.

Food Security: The World Bank says that by virtue of its location in the Sahel, Eritrea suffers periodic droughts and chronic food shortages which hamper development efforts. While agencies warned that millions in the Horn of Africa were being affected by famine in 2011, Eritrea was denying a crisis.

Media: In recent years Eritrea has become one of the world's most secretive countries. It doesn't have any privately-owned indigenous media, and sits alongside North Korea in global media freedom rankings.

International: Eritrea and Ethiopia remain in dispute after their 1998-2000 border war; in 2009 the UN imposed sanctions on Eritrea after accusing it of backing anti-Ethiopian Islamist insurgents in Somalia.

Intervening Obstacles

According to the Migration and Home Affairs Directorate General of the European Commission, 276,113 migrants entered the EU irregularly in 2014. This represents an increase of 138% compared to the same period in 2013. There are many intervening obstacles that migrants have to overcome in achieving their goal.

Firstly, the EU tries to control access to the 28 member states at their common border. In 2002, the EU adopted a legal framework on smuggling (*Directive defining the facilitation of unauthorised entry, transit and residence* and *Framework Decision on the strengthening of the penal framework to prevent the facilitation of unauthorised entry, transit and residence*). Operational measures have been undertaken jointly by EU State law enforcement authorities with the support of EU Agencies to disrupt and dismantle organised criminal groups involved in the facilitation of irregular immigration. For example, the EU supported the Italian Government scheme, "Operation Mare Nostrum", a military and humanitarian operation aiming to rescue the migrants and arrest the traffickers of immigrants in the Mediterranean until the end of 2014. The replacement EU force, called Triton, is operating with a third of the Mare Nostrum budget, and questions have been raised over its capacity to monitor over 30,000 square miles of sea.

Intelligence on modus operandi and routes used by smugglers has been collected, including through debriefing of migrants and the EU Network of Immigration Liaison Officers. Recognising the weaknesses in the current approach, the European Commission is preparing a new comprehensive approach to counter migrant smuggling, which will be presented in 2015. It will focus on prevention through enhanced cooperation with countries of origin and transit. It also hopes to dismantle the criminal networks through reinforced intelligence sharing, investigation capacities and prosecution. There is no such thing as an EU or European immigration policy. There are 28 national systems constrained by national politics, shaped by culture and history.

German multiculturalism derives from the foreign labour force, mainly Turkish, brought in to power the “economic miracle” of the 1960s. The newer EU countries of eastern Europe were, until a generation ago, closed societies behind the iron curtain with no experience of mass migration except the flight of their native populations from Russian occupation. They have continued to export their own people to western Europe since the first joined the EU in 2004. The destination of migrants within the EU also varies widely. For example, EU figures show that Estonia had 155 asylum applications last year, whereas Germany had more than 200,000. (There were 626,000 asylum applications in the EU in 2014, which was 200,000 more than 2013).

However, the process of applying for asylum is similar throughout the EU. Each applicant’s fingerprints are taken and sent to a database called EURODAC. The country where the migrant applies for asylum is responsible for the asylum application. Many irregular migrants do not apply for asylum in the first EU country they reach as they wish to make their claim in a different country. Hence the high number of claims in Germany, despite having borders distant from the main transit routes. An asylum applicant is interviewed by a case worker trained in EU law, with the help of an interpreter, to determine whether they may qualify for refugee status. If the claim is successful then refugee status is granted, which gives the person certain rights, such as access to a residence permit, the labour market and healthcare. However, if the claim is not successful the applicant may be returned to their country of origin. Despite this, EU figures show that less than 40% of the 425,000 failed claims in 2014 resulted in deportation.

Migration into Europe is clearly a very difficult and dangerous migration to undertake. The physical barriers of the Mediterranean Sea and the Rhodope and Stara Planina mountains of Greece and Bulgaria present dangerous migration routes. However, migrants rely on criminal networks of smugglers to enter the EU clandestinely via land, air and sea routes.

The complexity of criminal networks that bring people from war-torn nations to the African shores of the Mediterranean and then on to boats are not just necessarily criminal. They are also multinational, informal and ever-changing, with the migrants themselves having minimal contact with the organising gangs. Palestinian survivors of one tragedy recounted to the Guardian newspaper having arranged their passage via a “travel office” in Gaza, making their own way to the Egyptian port of Damietta on tourist visas, before being taken by bus to a ship, and then once at sea switching vessels three times. This is a highly complex journey posing very significant dangers. For example, 700 migrants were reported lost at sea in one shipwreck on 18 April alone. There is currently enormous concern in Europe over how to save the refugees from drowning.

Pull Factors of destination – Southern Europe (European Union)

Figure 4. compares a selection of development indicators for countries involved in the migration to illustrate why migrants might believe they would gain better employment opportunities or an improved financial position. The high number of migrants suggests that these perceived benefits, in comparison to the experienced push factors, are sufficient justification to risk the intervening obstacles.

Figure 4. A comparison of development indicators for source and host countries

Host Countries	GNP per capita in US\$ (IMF 2014)	Human Development Index (UNDP, 2014)	Source Countries	GNP per capita in US\$ (IMF 2014)	Human Development Index (UNDP, 2014)
Germany	49721	0.911	Libya	6623	0.784
UK	43837	0.892	Egypt	3303	0.682
Italy	35823	0.872	Sudan	1979	0.473
Greece	21653	0.853	Eritrea	590	0.381

Figure 4. shows the significant variation in indicators of development for host and source regions – especially with the northern European states that attract the highest number of asylum applications in the EU. The clear differences in wealth and quality of life between the host and source countries fit with Neoclassical Economic Theory. Successful migrants can clearly hope to gain better employment opportunities or an improved financial position. Moreover, there are large established migrant community diasporas from the source countries in the host countries that send significant remittances home. According to a World Bank Study in 2010 Ethiopia received US\$387m in remittances. The same study showed that Sudan received remittances equal to 6% of its GDP in the same year. This fits with Relative Deprivation Theory’s argument that awareness of the income difference between neighbours in a source community that benefit from remittances is an important factor in migration.

Figure 5. Comparison of selected indicators of development to illustrate push factors from source to host regions.

Indicator	Eritrea	United Kingdom	Comparison
GDP per Capita	\$504.30 (Ranked 169 th)	\$38,514.46 (Ranked 21 st)	UK 76 times more than Eritrea
Population below poverty line	50% (Ranked 6 th)	14% (Ranked 18 th)	Eritrea 4 times more than UK
Fear of Crime	Ranked 1st	Ranked 47th	18% more than United Kingdom
Life expectancy	60 (male), 64 (female)	78 (male), 83 (female)	28% longer life expectancy in UK (29% female)
Minimum Wage	\$33 (public sector)	\$1800 (based on average weekly hours)	Minimum wage 55 times higher in UK

Source: Nationmaster

A focused comparison of quality of life between Eritrea and the United Kingdom is shown in Figure 5. François Crépeau, UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants was quoted in The Guardian newspaper explaining the attraction.

“They come to Europe because they know there are jobs there. Countries in Europe say, ‘We don’t have any job for our own citizens, we can’t welcome all these people’, but that’s not true. There are jobs. There are very poorly paid jobs in agriculture, in construction, in hospitality or in the care of the elderly or care of young people. We refuse to acknowledge our underground labour market because we like the price of tomatoes in June; we like our cleaning lady to be that cheap. These people know there are jobs. This is a huge pull factor.”

Italy: A case study to show the impact of migration on host countries

The “Statistical Dossier on Immigration” by the Italian National Office Against Racial Discrimination (UNAR) and the IDOS Study and Research Centre suggests that there were more than five million migrants residing in Italy in 2013. As Figure 6. shows, the country is the main arrival point for migrants using the central Mediterranean route to the EU, even if many will claim asylum in Britain, France, Germany and Scandinavia.

Figure 6. Migrant arrivals by sea in Italy, 2014

Country	Men	Women	Minors	Total
Syria	25,155	6,203	10,965	42,323
Eritrea	24,061	6,076	4,192	34,329
Mali	9,382	27	529	9,938
Nigeria	6,989	1,454	557	9,000
Gambia	7,409	28	1,270	8,707
Palestine	3,413	1,035	1,634	6,082
Somalia	3,010	1,104	1,642	5,756

Migrants represent 7.4 per cent of the Italian population and contribute 12 per cent of the country’s GDP. They pay EUR 13.3 billion annually in tax. Nearly 80,000 children were born to migrant parents in Italy last year. This is significant in Italy, which had a population growth rate of 0.3% in 2014 (171st slowest rate of growth in the world). The number of foreign enterprises in the country rose by 5.4 per cent. This is also significant, as Italy has been struggling to improve the performance of the economy. The economy contracted by 2.4% in 2012, 1.9% in 2013 and 0.3% in 2014.

The European Migration Network has also researched some negative impacts of migration in Italy. In particular, pressure on housing supply in certain districts of Rome and Milan and the exploitation of migrant labour by organised crime and widespread illegal employment. Attitudes to migration have been hardening. The tendency of the media and political parties (in particular the Northern League) to represent migrants in negative terms has contributed to this.

Summary

- Irregular migration to the European Union, via southern Europe has been increasing over the past decade.
- This is mainly due to push factors in the Middle East and Africa. Civil war, poverty and human rights violations are widespread – in particular Syria, Libya, Eritrea and Somalia.
- Natural Barriers (the Mediterranean Sea and Balkan mountain ranges) provide dangerous intervening obstacles.
- EU member states and FRONTEX are placing further obstacles in the way of migrants, such as by disrupting the people-smuggling networks.
- Despite these obstacles, the pull factors of the EU are sufficient to persuade migrants to take the risk.
- Peace, security and protection from persecution are important attractions but successful migrants can also hope to gain better employment opportunities or an improved financial position.
- Wide differences between indicators of development between source and host regions exacerbate this.

- The significance of remittances to source country economies as well as the success of past migrants act as a spur to further migration.
- There is controversial debate in many host countries on the balance of costs and benefits of this migration. In Italy, for example, migrants provide an economic boost to a struggling economy and a significant contribution to the birth rate. However, there is an association between irregular migration and economic exploitation and organised crime.

Activities

1. List the evidence in this article to show why the migration into Europe is taking place. Categorise the evidence as push and pull factors.
2. Follow the latest developments in the media.
3. Conduct your own local research into migration. What evidence of migration can be found in your local high street? What secondary evidence can be found in your local newspaper?

Further Research

Nowhere to go. Geographical Dossier. Geographical magazine July 2015

United Nations High Commission for Refugees

<http://www.unhcr.org.uk/>

International Organisation for Migration

<https://www.iom.int/cms/en/sites/iom/home.html>

Frontex <http://frontex.europa.eu/>

Europe’s Boat People. The Economist April 25th 2015

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This Geo Factsheet was researched and written by Paul Wraight, Teacher of Geography, Peter Symonds College, Winchester Curriculum Press, Bank House, 105 King Street, Wellington, TF1 1NU Geopress Factsheets may be copied free of charge by teaching staff or students, provided that their school is a registered subscriber. No part of these Factsheets may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any other form or by any other means, without the prior permission of the publisher. ISSN 1351-5136