



THE POPULATION MIGRATION FROM NORTH AFRICA AND SOUTH-WEST ASIA

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Abstract: Migration is a contemporary phenomenon which is deeply rooted in history. The European Union, in spite of its inconveniences, represents a good example of success nowadays, based on social, economic and financial cooperation among the 27 European states. To emigrate in the EU, so as to take advantage of the welfare of this region, is a goal for many inhabitants from Middle East and North Africa. Not matter how the situation in the MENA will evolve, the migration from this area to Europe will continue and will have a significant importance in Europeans life, having both positive and negative aspects.

Keywords: migration; population; European Union; MENA.

"Migration is a phenomenon which consists of moving some set of people from one area to another, followed by the territorial change of residence and/or employment in some form of activity in the arrival area. Any act of migration is, at the same time, immigration (inputs) and emigration (exit)".¹

According to the definition of the Romanian term *MIGRAȚIUNE*, *migrațiuni* means, mass displacement, some tribes or peoples from one territory to another, determined by economic factors, social, political or natural; migration. 2. mass displacement of some animals from one region to another, for the purpose of reproduction, or the search for food, etc.; migration. 3. (In MediaWiki) *Migrațiunea petrolului* (or crude oil) = the process of displacement of oil and associated gas from the deposit that originated in rocks in underground areas. [Pr.: your-u--var. *migrație*: s. f.] -Fr. Migration, LAT. *migratio-onis*."²

¹ Traian Rotaru, „Migrație”, *Sociology Dictionary*, coordinators C. Zamfir și L. Vlăsceanu, Babel Publishing House, Bucharest, 1998, pp. 351-353.

² *Explanatory Dictionary of Romanian language*, ediția a II-a, Academia Română, Institutul de Lingvistică „Iorgu Iordan” Univers Encyclopedic Publishing House, Bucharest, 1998.

Whatever the definition, migration represents a contemporary phenomenon which is part of daily life and involves the movement of a significant number of people. It always operates with migration terms such as *starting area*, *route* and *arrival area*, regardless of whether this motion is made inside or outside of a State. Migration also involves the terms of *emigrant* and *immigrant*, where emigrant is a person who leaves the State of residence, and the immigrant is a person who is in a country, for various reasons, other than the State where he/she was born. Another classification of migration is made by legal and illegal migrations which are determined by different causes.

Thus, legal migration is mostly determined by economic causes, in which the people usually are qualified or highly qualified in a particular field, and leave the area of residence with the declared goal of achieving superior income and benefits, which will enable them to have a standard of living higher than that experienced in the country of origin. Illegal migration is usually determined by the lack of security or political causes, in which the State of residence may no longer provide the minimum acceptable level of those people, making them leave for other States which can provide the minimum acceptable level.

The area located in Northern Africa and the Middle East is known as MENA zone -Middle East and North Africa³. This area includes the following

³ <http://istizada.com/mena-region/>, accessed on 26.03.2018.



countries: Bahrain, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Palestine (West Bank and Gaza Strip), Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Yemen. According to some specialists Turkey and Sudan are in this area, too⁴. MENA area was for centuries, with some exceptions, starting with the 16th century until the end of World War I, part of the Ottoman Empire. Following the Sykes-Picot Agreement⁵, the zones of influence changed, new boundaries were established, and new States were born. The situation evolved, and after the end of World War I, mankind witnessed how the majority of the States in the area became independent States. These States had been affected by political instability, military conflicts, had had economic difficulties, and financial and economic issues which had influenced the evolution of the new nations and created social problems. Thus, some of the inhabitants of these areas, due to financial hardship and lack of perspective in the countries of origin, believed that the right solution for solving it was to migrate, thus leading to the creation of a migratory phenomenon.

The main reasons leading to the migratory phenomenon are: political, economic, social, military, and in the MENA area all these reasons existing simultaneously. Also, because of climate change recorded in recent years, we can add the problems posed by the lack of water resources, and food to the list of reasons which trigger the phenomenon of migration in the MENA area.

Thus, many countries in the MENA area have difficulties in ensuring the demand for fresh water. Most of the MENA area is covered by desert, and agriculture and food sector are of vital importance for the economies of the States in the region. An important area for agriculture is the area called the *Fertile Crescent*, "the most productive territory in the form of an arc of a circle around the desert from Syria, Jordan and Iraq. Other important areas for agriculture are found in the floodplain of the Nile from Egypt and the coastal regions of Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco. Ismail Serageldin, a

former World Bank Vice President for Sustainable Development and Environment⁶ (1992-1998) and Special Programs⁷ (1998-2000), seemed to reiterate the concerns of Boutros Ghali in its Declaration from 1995: „many of the wars from this century were and still are linked to oil ... instead, the wars of the next century will be about water”⁸.

Along history there have been disputes which were triggered by resource-related issues, namely oil, natural gas, water, and food⁹. Thus, in the history of this area we can identify a number of resource conflicts: the Suez crisis from 1956, Israeli-Arab wars from 1967, and 1973, Iraqi-Iranian War (1980-1988), which also generated migratory phenomena, particularly among Palestinian population. Migratory phenomena must be assessed in the light of the time factor and past events and present events must be analyzed in order to predict future developments of migratory events. In the past, two aspects of the migratory phenomenon were identified, namely migration from MENA countries to the Persian Gulf area, in particular to the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council-GCC¹⁰ and MENA countries migration towards the European Union.

In the contemporary period a series of events occurred that influenced migration. So, the oil crisis from 1973, when OPEC countries increased the price of oil led to a growth in the living standards of the countries of the GCC and Libya but affected the economic growth of the European countries. At the same time, the increase of the price negatively affected the welfare of the population of the MENA area, especially from Turkey, Morocco and Egypt, leading to an increase in the migratory wave from these countries to the countries of Northern and Western Europe. In addition, a series of events such as the first Gulf war from 1991, the wars in

⁶ World Bank, *Environmentally and Socially Sustainable Development*.

⁷ World Bank, *Special Programs*.

⁸ Ecaterina Mațoi, *Deficitul de apă în MENA: sursă de conflict sau cauză a migrației?*, <http://www.punctulcritic.ro/ecaterina-matoi-deficitul-de-apa-in-mena-sursa-de-conflict-sau-cauza-a-migrației.html>, accessed on 21.03.2018.

⁹ <http://www.contributors.ro/global-europa/primavara-arabasi-razboaiele-petrolului/>, accessed on 21.03.2018.
<http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/gcc/overview>, accessed on 26.03.2018.

¹⁰ <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/gcc/overview>, accessed on 26.03.2018.

⁴ Michael Bommes, Heinz Fassmann & Wiebke Sievers, *MIGRATION FROM THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA TO EUROPE*, Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam 2014, p. 17.

⁵ <https://www.rfi.ro/special-paris-87016-o-suta-de-ani-mai-tarziu-acordurile-sykes-picot-tot-mai-sunt-criticate>, accessed on 21.03.2018.



Afghanistan and Iraq, the Arab Spring¹¹ (in 2010) affected the social system in the MENA area, producing serious economic imbalances, leading to the migratory phenomenon. Increased negative demographic growths in most West European States in conjunction with these phenomena have resulted in an influx of illegal immigrants, mostly in the European States.

An important role in the emergence of this migratory wave was created by the Arab Spring, a phenomenon that began in Tunisia in December 2010, which revealed the desire of young people from MENA States for emancipation, and for a better living. After about seven years, it became clear that the economic and security situation in the area had undergone continuous degradation and had led to military conflicts, of various intensities. These conflicts created a migration crisis in which millions of residents from MENA area left to Europe. Although in the most of the cases, economic aspects were identified as the main cause of migration, in this case there are numerous question marks relating to the initiation and development of the migratory phenomenon. These general reasons were added as elements generating migration aspects of the political issues, security, education, health and infrastructure.

The migratory flow, most often accompanied by illicit trafficking of goods and drugs, is a phenomenon that took place for years, reaching the point where the routes used are known to the security institutions, the only fluctuations being in the number of people travelling and the legality of the action. The following routes were identified:

- the West African route – the States of West Africa (Mauritania, Ivory Coast, Morocco, etc.) to the Canary Islands, and later to Western Europe;
- the West-Mediterranean route (Italian route) – which starts from Libya/Tunisia, across the Mediterranean, then to reach Italy as final destination;
- the Central Mediterranean route (Spanish route) – which departs from Morocco through Spain, having as final destination countries in Western or Northern Europe;
- the main Balkan route – which typically has as its starting points the countries of the Middle

East and East Africa, passing through Turkey, and from there following the Balkan route, i.e. Greece-Serbia/Macedonia and Slovakia-Italy/Austria, having as the final destination Western Europe;

- the secondary Balkan route that begins in Turkey, passing through Bulgaria, Serbia/Romania, Hungary, Austria and the finally reaching the Western European States;

- the Eastern route – which begins in the Middle East via Russia and reaching the EU's eastern border with Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova and the Russian Federation, having as final destination Western Europe;

- the Nordic route – which starts from Middle East countries and then passing through Russia, to the Sweden/Finland as final destination.

In the years after the *Arab Spring* there was a migrant flow, with a maximum number of immigrants reached in the year 2015. Thus, the "influx of applicants for asylum experienced a strong upward trend, doubling it in 2015 in relation to 2014 and increasing almost thrice towards 2013. The total number, at the level of 2015 was 1,393,285 of applications for asylum request, more than half of them being registered in the period between August and November 2015, a quarter being requested by Syrian citizens. Of these, over 90 percent obtained one form of protection or another"¹².

By analyzing this data, we can say that whatever route is chosen, each of these routes has as a point of origin a country in MENA area, and as the final destination, one of the EU countries. This migratory phenomenon from MENA area to Europe cannot be analyzed as a single, independent phenomenon, as it has taken place in conjunction with other migratory flows from Asia or Eastern Europe. In an attempt to limit the migratory phenomenon, the EU States have tightened security measures at borders, installed modern monitoring equipment at borders, and have equipped the border guard forces in charge with cutting-edge equipment. In addition, to complement these measures, identity and travel documents have changed, and their level of security has increased. All these issues have not deterred the networks trafficking human beings and goods;

¹¹ <http://romanioliberal.ro/special/documentare/cinci-ani-de-%E2%80%99Eprimavara-araba---ce-au-castigat-popoarele-musulmane-403135>, accessed on 26.03.2018.

¹² Mărgărit Dora Sonia Georgiana, *Border security in the context of major migration – Challenges and possible solutions*, în „Criminal investigation Journal”, Year IX, no 1, Bucharest, 2016, p. 635.



„smugglers market and documents forgers”¹³ have been continuously developed and kept pace with the evolution of the measures imposed by the authorities, in order to enable their illicit activities, up to date. Financial income made as a result of these actions is very important, valued at billions of euros unofficially, but impossible to be determined precisely, which has become an important goal for major international criminal organizations.

Also, careful analysis of these migration flows shows us that the existence of the phenomenon of migration will continue in the near future, based on the many similarities identified between the migration flows that have occurred over time from MENA to the EU. From the point of view of security risks which can affect the EU, the same type of threats was identified by the EU and NATO. Both organizations identified that the main risk factors are illegal migration, in conjunction with terrorism, religious extremism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD)¹⁴.

All of these migratory phenomena from the MENA area to the EU influenced the activities in the surrounding area and in the immediate vicinity. According to official data published by the Global Conflict Tracker¹⁵ of the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), there were seven conflicts in the area, including four that are in progress in Iraq, Syria, Libya and Yemen and three latent conflicts in Lebanon (sectarian conflict), the Arab-Israeli conflict and Islamic militancy from Egypt. The conflict in Syria represents a distinct type of conflict, being the area where the interests of the regional or great powers of the world converge.

Russia's involvement in the conflict has allowed President Bashar al Assad's regime to remain in power and to develop the personality cult, but at the cost of loss of numerous territories, with "direct and indirect victims of war up to 470,000 people according to the Centre for the study of Syrian Policies (SCPR), a total far greater than the

figure advanced by the UN until it ceased to create statistics, 18 months ago. In total, 11.5% of the population has been killed or wounded since the crisis erupted in March 2011, estimated the report's authors. The number of wounded people is 1.9 million.”¹⁶ At the same time, the conflict created a high number of domestic or international migrants, unofficial sources advancing a figure of just over 6 million.

In January 2018 a military operation started, carried out by Turkish army against Kurdish fighters from the „Popular Protection Units” (YPG), in the North-Western Afrin area¹⁷ of Syrian territory, named the „Olive Branch”, in order to create a security corridor at the southern border of Turkey and to remove what the Turkish army deemed as “terrorist elements”. These Turkish army attacks resulted in a number of victims, among them children and civilians. The attacks were condemned by the international community, complicating the situation in the area through the emergence of a new wave of refugees from Syria.

MENA region continues to generate problems both within its borders and in the exterior because of the ongoing conflict. As a result of an analysis carried out, without minimizing the positive effects of legal migration from MENA to the EU, we could state that the following problems were identified as a result of illegal migration:

- the large influx of illegal immigrants has put great pressure on the EU to defend the outer borders of the Union and to provide their security during the journey within it;
- the lack of some clear provisions in the legal framework governing the rights of migrants, namely the right to asylum, work, health, education;
- the emergence of a large number of workers on the labor market in the EU, some of them highly qualified, qualified or ready to work on the black market without a contract, or for lower salaries than normally, determines overburdening the budgets of adoption States of important budgetary income;
- health security vulnerabilities – the large number of illegal immigrants have not benefited from medical assistance during their journey and

¹³ Petre Duțu, Cristina Bogzeanu, *Current Challenges for European Security*, "Carol I" National Defense University Publishing House, Bucharest, 2010, p. 46.

¹⁴ Gheorghe Minculete, Daniela Răpan, *Approaches on Current Risks and Threats to the International Security Environment*, in Science and Military, no. 2 (Volume 7)/2012, Armed Forces Academy General Milan Rastislav Štefánik, Slovak Republic, p. 4.

¹⁵ <https://www.cfr.org/interactives/global-conflict-tracker#/global-conflict-tracker>, accessed on 28.03.2018.

¹⁶ <https://www.hotnews.ro/stiri-esential-20787502-bilantul-ingrozitor-razboiului-din-siria-470-000-morti-1-9-milioane-raniti-pierderile-economice-depasesc-255-mld-dolari.htm>, accessed on 02.04.2018.

¹⁷ <http://www.contributors.ro/global-europa/%E2%80%99Eramurade-maslin%E2%80%99D-sau-turcia-contra-stator-unite-in-nordul-siriei/>, accessed on 29.03.2018.



can be infested with various microbes or diseases;

- cultural and religious differences between immigrants and citizens of the EU, very often impossible to be overcome;

- the proliferation of terrorist organizations and their affiliated ones increase the risk of terrorist actions in the territory of the Union;

- the development of organized crime groups which are carrying out illicit activities, in particular drugs, goods and people trafficking, thus ensuring important financial funds to their organizations;

- the financial efforts made by the EU to ensure the required daily living expenses, the funds necessary for their integration into society and for their families reunification;

- the attacks carried out by immigrants over the civilian population, especially sexual assaults on women from Germany and Sweden.

As a result of this migratory wave, there were and still are many disputes within the EU, at the political level, regarding migration. Starting with Britain's exit from the EU (BREXIT) the role of France and Germany has grown within the Union, and these two countries have tried to assume the role of "hard core" of the Union, advancing the idea of a quota system of refugees among EU states and expenditure related to the EU. This initiative has encountered resistance in southeastern Europe from the Visegrad Group¹⁸.

Romania, which was historically only a secondary route for migration agreed in 2015 with the allocation of a number of 4,180 illegal refugees that had arrived in the EU, according to European Commission decisions, which established a so-called *compulsory rate*¹⁹. However, in the year 2017 this share had not been achieved, in Romania residing only 710 people "in need of international protection"²⁰.

All these factors listed above have been affecting European citizens directly and indirectly and have provoked a reaction of opposition of EU citizens in relation to the phenomenon of migration and migrants. However, according to official data, the

¹⁸<http://www.ziare.com/europa/romania-ue/reactie-virulenta-a-grupului-visegrad-fata-de-planul-ue-de-a-da-bani-doar-tarilor-cu-justitie-independenta-1499311>, accessed on 02.04.2018.

¹⁹ <http://www.gandul.info/stiri/surpriza-ue-pentru-romania-cati-refugiati-au-fost-trimisi-tara-noastra-in-baza-cotelor-obligatorii-16687662>, accessed on 02.04.2018.

²⁰ *Ibidem*.

migration phenomenon could not be stopped, but only diminished. Further on, high living standards and financial revenues realized in the EU will be a goal for the residents of the MENA area who will try anything to live in a State of the European Union.

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