



## ***Irregular Immigration: Matching the Labor Market and Mobility Incentives***

Atlantic Community members and contributors support the restructuring of the EU and US irregular migration policy. As the two largest destinations for irregular migration, they stand to learn from each other. Irregular, often referred to as illegal, migration policy should take into account the needs and realities of host countries and the rights and freedoms of migrants. First and foremost, the issue warrants well-informed discussions that avoid hyper-politicization (Vollmer).

The goal is neither to legitimize irregular migration nor to give up on the challenge of regulation but to better manage the phenomenon as a whole. The best steps forward are to restructure the economic and legal forces behind the pushes and pulls of migration. Policies should seek to reduce its adverse effects and approach irregular immigration efficiently. Although recent immigration flows into the EU and the US have slowed, policies still beg reconsideration, especially in the anticipation of economic recovery. To this end, the recommendations below aim at redefining irregular migration policies to be more manageable and mutually advantageous for destination countries and immigrants.

### **1. Restructure economic arrangements with sender countries.**

The EU migration policy framework has taken a local approach and prioritized its collaborations with civil society actors like NGOs and universities in sender countries. Nonetheless, bilateral arrangements with sender governments need strengthening. The EU's mobility partnerships are a good start, but sender countries need economic incentives to cooperate in the management of irregular migration, including guarding their borders more effectively and combating migrant smuggling and trafficking (Triandafyllidou). A long-term solution would consist of easing EU protectionist policies, thereby granting the most cooperative countries the increased privilege of exporting to the EU market (Gökham). This policy would not only provide incentives for collaboration but would also promote economic growth within sender countries, which should reduce the emigration demand within them over time.

### **2. Increase incentives for legal migration.**

Policies should increase the incentives for legal migration in addition to maintaining current disincentives for irregular migration (Alden). One way to approach this is to encourage migrants to return to their countries after their visa has expired. As a destination country, Turkey has repealed its permanent re-entry ban on overstayed visas, which has led to a decrease in irregular migration as entrants believe they can re-enter Turkey again (Düvell). This policy should be considered in the US and the EU (Robinson).

A more informed revisit of guest worker programs could help direct the flows of irregular migration toward legal migration (Alden). Due to the problems with integrating guest workers into mainstream society, the program should be based on seasonal employment, i.e. the agricultural or tourism industries (Funk, Alden). Withholding migrants' tax returns or social security until they return to their sender countries would encourage their departure. To discourage overreliance on migrant workers and to protect the native labor force, rather than labor attestation schemes—requiring employers to prove they tried to hire a native worker—employers should pay a tax or levy for each migrant employee (Alden). Rather than just simply reducing irregular immigration, guest worker programs do so in a way where both the labor market and immigrant can benefit.

### **3. Target regularization policies for individuals and for the labor market.**

The legalization of irregular migrants, or regularization, allows them to contribute to their host countries while minimizing the strain on state social resources (Morticelli). Regularization policy should follow a targeted approach, focusing on those individuals who have deeper ties to the country, i.e. those without a criminal record who have worked in the country for a given number of years, or focusing on children (see the Deferred Action for Children Arrivals policy in the US) (Collett). Regularization policies should respond to the domestic labor market by granting authorization to a specified amount of irregular immigrants, based on skill level and according to job availability (Robinson).

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