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Migration Policy Scoreboard: A Monitoring Mechanism for EU Asylum and Migration Policy¹

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Key Messages

Managing migration across the EU's external border requires a comprehensive policy response.

For policies to be effective, member states need to work together and share responsibility in several policy areas, including asylum and return, refugee resettlement, border management, policies on legal migration and support for non-EU countries hosting refugees.

To ensure that member states share these responsibilities equitably, the contributions from member states must be compared taking into account their capacities in the different areas of asylum and migration-related policies. To do so, data collection needs to be harmonised, unified and up-to-date.

In addition, effective assessment and monitoring of member states' contributions to the EU's asylum and migration policy requires an institutionalised monitoring system at the EU level. We therefore recommend that the European Commission include a monitoring mechanism in the 'New Pact on Migration and Asylum.'

1. Mattia Di Salvo is a researcher and Mikkel Barslund is a research fellow at CEPS (Centre for European Policy Studies). This policy insight builds upon and further develops chapter 4.3 in MEDAM (Mercator Dialogue on Asylum and Migration), 2019 MEDAM Assessment Report on Asylum and Migration Policies in Europe, Kiel: IfW (2019). We are grateful for comments by and discussion with Andreas Backhaus, Matthias Lücke, Melanie Radike and Martin Ruhs.

This policy contribution is based on research conducted by the authors within the framework of MEDAM (www.medam-migration). The Mercator Dialogue on Asylum and Migration (MEDAM) is an international research alliance funded by the Mercator Foundation. Its aim is to conduct new research to inform policy debates about the reform of asylum and migration policies in Europe. MEDAM is led by the Kiel Institute for the World Economy and it includes the EU's Migration Policy Centre (MPC) as one of the core partner organisations.





This monitoring mechanism could be modelled on the European Pillar of Social Rights, which presents current conditions as well as developments in the area of social rights to achieve better working and living conditions across Europe.

Introduction

Since 2015, migration has been at the top of the EU and national policy makers' agenda due to the surge in crossings to the EU, first from Turkey to Greece and further north via the Balkans route, and then across the Central Mediterranean route. The situation exposed the EU's weaknesses in managing migration, with most member states agreeing that changes are needed to improve the EU's responsiveness in the future, in order to ensure, on the one hand, protection of those in need, and on the other, more solidarity among member states.

Despite the fact that there is little consensus on how to structure the future EU asylum and migration policy among member states, it is clear that management of migration at the EU's external border is here to stay as an important policy issue. This issue has the potential to directly or indirectly compromise some of the EU's key achievements, such as the Schengen area of free movement, as evidenced by the re-emergence since 2015 of semi-permanent border controls within the Schengen area.

Migration management along EU borders is a multifaceted challenge. It is unlikely that a narrow focus on one particular aspect of migration policy will do much to improve overall migration management. Without the right set of complementary policies addressing the needs of all actors, incentives for cooperation will be limited, and thus the level of enforcement low (MEDAM 2019). Hence, a comprehensive approach tackling several aspects – from border protection, faster asylum procedures, cooperation with non-EU countries on return procedures and labour migration to better integration in receiving countries – is necessary (MEDAM, 2018). A comprehensive approach to migration is also crucial for the new European Commission in its quest for a New Pact on Migration.²

Given this multifaceted challenge, solidarity and responsibility sharing among member states – the guiding principle in the Lisbon Treaty for managing migration

– can take many forms and actions.³ Due to differences in initial conditions, member states may want to share more responsibility in some areas than others. While not all member states may need to be involved in all areas of asylum and migration policy, all of them need to be engaged in at least some elements.

This raises the issue of adequately monitoring not only developments related to people on the move, but also, importantly, a more detailed country-level monitoring of contributions towards sharing responsibility. In this policy paper, we suggest a mechanism for monitoring member states' contributions to the EU migration agenda and call for improving data collection in terms of the level of disaggregation and frequency, as well as coverage of different thematic areas in order to support a New Pact for Migration. In light of the importance of migration and asylum, policy monitoring should be regular and at the highest level. A framework similar to that used for the European Pillar of Social Rights could serve that purpose.

The Need for Harmonised and Up-To-Date Granular Data

There is a lack of up-to-date and comparable data on many aspects of migration.⁴ In general, limited, outdated and insufficiently disaggregated information restrict the level of detailed analysis for any policy issue, and thus risk weakening the decision-making process and potentially the quality of the policy response itself.

In the area of migration and asylum policy, the important task of collecting and utilising accurate and disaggregated data to inform policy-making is listed among the objectives of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration.⁵ Efforts to increase the availability of

2. See the European Commission Political Guidelines (2019–2024) in von der Leyen (n.d.).

3. As noted in European Parliament, "Migration and Asylum: A challenge for Europe", Factsheet, Brussels (2018), [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/PERI/2017/600414/IPOL_PERI\(2017\)600414_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/PERI/2017/600414/IPOL_PERI(2017)600414_EN.pdf).

4. See European Commission, Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Regulation (EC) No 862/2007 of the European Parliament and of the Council on Community statistics on migration and international protection, COM(2018) 307, Brussels (2018a), <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52018PC0307&from=EN>; see also Santamaria and Vespe (2018).

5. For details, see UN, "Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration", Draft Rev 2, New York, NY (2018), https://refugeesmigrants.un.org/sites/default/files/180713_agreed_outcome_global_compact_for_migration.pdf.



high quality, timely and reliable data disaggregated also by migratory status are likewise mentioned under Target 17.18 of the Sustainable Development Goals.⁶ For the EU to have a key role in these international actions, it is clear that there is a need for detailed and comparable information at member state level to show the overall EU contribution to global migration management.

Discussion on the importance of enhancing the detail and quality of migration data, and their comparability across member states, has been ongoing among European institutions since May 2018, with the proposal for a new regulation by the European Commission.⁷ As stated in the proposal, further data disaggregation, in terms of the dimensions covered (e.g. gender, age, vulnerabilities) and the frequency (e.g. quarterly data), has been requested by stakeholders,⁸ and failure to provide it would hold policy makers back from formulating evidence-based policy responses.

In fact, data on many indicators of migration and asylum policy outcomes are not available in a harmonised and easily accessible format at Eurostat with regular intervals. As an example, the conditions of member states' asylum systems, such as caseload and average time to the first decision, is published infrequently upon specific demand and only for a subset of countries (ECRE 2016). Inconsistencies between sources can give rise to quality issues when looking at EU aggregates (e.g. the double counting of asylum applications; Santamaria and Vespe 2018), as well as hamper cross-country comparison and lead to EU aggregates based on different definitions (e.g. for first permits for seasonal workers).⁹

In terms of timing, a significant issue is the lag between the collection and publication of the data, as in the case

of regular migration, for which data are available at Eurostat one to two years after migration happens.¹⁰ Time lags also differ among data sources (e.g. in data on arrivals from member states and from Frontex).

A continuous overview of past and current member states' hosting and processing capacity (such as places available in reception centres, the number of search and rescue operations, and the processing of applications for international protection) would notably help enhance EU responsiveness to sudden and significant increases in arrivals. For instance, it could help to identify resources and mobilise them for the timely support of member states in need. Support could be rendered through personnel from EU agencies (e.g. the European Border and Coast Guard Agency and the European Asylum and Support Office)¹¹ or other member states, or through financing from the EU budget to improve, for example, reception conditions.

Ongoing monitoring with a significant level of data disaggregation would also enable the creation of detailed data series over time, with the potential to enhance and improve evaluations of EU policies in the area of migration and asylum.

This would, first of all, benefit the analysis of migration to the EU in terms of population characteristics (e.g. gender, age, vulnerabilities, country of origin and transit countries) and associated changes. This detailed knowledge could, for instance, provide initial information for decisions on asylum applications, or help member states tailor their policy responses based on the needs and specificities of people sheltered. It would also enhance understanding of the drivers of migration, with the potential to better target development, humanitarian aid and neighbourhood policies (MEDAM 2019; Santamaria and Vespe 2018).

Second, robust data series over time could help detect the presence of systematic inefficiencies in specific areas of migration management. Taking the case of enforcing orders to leave, for instance, a historic view of the return rate and its pace (with quarterly data as suggested in the proposal by the European Commission) would highlight where capacity for enforcement is low and assess

6. UN Sustainable Development Goal 1; for more information, see <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/metadata/?Text=&Goal=17&Target=17.18> and <https://migrationdataportal.org/sdgs#0>.

7. See European Commission, Proposal on Community statistics, COM(2018) 307 (2018a).

8. They include, for instance, the European Statistical System Committee, the national statistical institutes, the DG for Migration and Home Affairs, EU agencies (e.g. the European Asylum Support Office, Frontex and EU Agency for Fundamental Rights), researchers, advocacy groups and international organisations (European Commission, Proposal on Community statistics, COM(2018) 307 (2018a)).

9. Data on seasonal workers from a Eurostat query on first permits issued for remunerated activities by reason [migr_resocc] are not reported for the majority of countries (e.g. Germany and the UK). Only a few countries (e.g. Greece, France and Italy) reported information for the entire time span (2008–18).

10. This is due to the definition of the dimension based on a duration of stay of 12 months and EU regulations in force (Santamaria and Vespe 2018).

11. See European Commission, "Migration: Solidarity within the EU", Factsheet, Brussels (2019), https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/FS_19_6076.



its causes. It could be that one member state encounters higher barriers than others because of a different composition of the countries of origin of people ordered to leave, and thus it faces a different degree of cooperation by authorities in the partner countries in carrying out bureaucratic procedures. The opposite might emerge too, with one member state possibly performing considerably worse than others despite a similar composition of the nationalities of people ordered to leave. The monitoring would thus help identify both the inefficiencies that are strictly member state-specific and the best practices from more successful member states to scale up at the European level.

A monitoring mechanism for the EU's asylum and migration agenda with regular reporting would use current and historical data to assess in detail member states' contributions to all areas of migration and asylum policy. This could serve as grounds for discussion in the Council concerning the topic as well as beyond (e.g. decisions on EU budget allocations) and assist application of the principle of solidarity and responsibility sharing.¹² Specifically, the monitoring mechanism would be a practical tool in the design of measures to strengthen the solidarity principle in the policy area of asylum and migration, as stated in Article 80 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union:

The policies of the Union set out in this Chapter¹³ and their implementation shall be governed by the principle of solidarity and fair sharing of responsibility, including its financial implications, between the Member States. Whenever necessary, the Union acts adopted pursuant to this Chapter shall contain appropriate measures to give effect to this principle.

12. The principle of solidarity is in fact expressed in the Treaty on European Union in Article 2, as one of the values of the EU, and in Article 3 as a common aspect the EU should promote. See the Consolidated Version of the Treaty on European Union, OJ C 326/13 (26.10.2012), https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:2bf140bf-a3f8-4ab2-b506-fd71826e6da6.0023.02/DOC_1&format=PDF.

13. See Title V, "Area of Freedom, Security and Justice", Chapter 2 on "Policies on Border Checks, Asylum and Immigration", Article 80, Consolidated Version of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, OJ C 326/47 (26.10.2012), https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:2bf140bf-a3f8-4ab2-b506-fd71826e6da6.0023.02/DOC_2&format=PDF.

Finally, the monitoring mechanism would apply not only to member states' contributions, but also to member states' employment of resources received in support during times of need. Indeed, the serious monitoring of project implementation and use of financing is necessary to increase the accountability of the actors involved as well as trust among member states.

The Monitoring Mechanism

The agenda on migration and asylum covers a vast range of policies. Many of these involve shared competences between the member states and the European Commission, while others are strictly the prerogative of member states. The framework for a monitoring mechanism must be able to deal with this complexity.

Another policy area, similar in complexity and shared competences, is that of the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR). The framework employed for monitoring the EPSR could apply to the area of migration policy in the form of a *migration policy scoreboard*. Both social policy and asylum and migration policy differ across member states in relation to historical roots and experience, while achieving progress is considered a shared political commitment and responsibility among EU member states.¹⁴

The European Semester provides a suitable set-up for monitoring national policies in these two policy areas, as it accounts for differences across countries while structuring collective efforts.¹⁵ Throughout the European Semester, there are steps for debating and amending policy recommendations at both the EU and member state levels, with active involvement by the European Council, which ultimately issues country-specific recommendations. Moreover, by allowing for several rounds of consultations, a set-up similar to the European Semester would provide, when necessary, the conditions to adjust benchmarks and contributions to support member states in their operations of reception.

14. See European Commission, Staff Working Document accompanying the document Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council and the European Economic and Social Committee: "Monitoring the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights", SWD(2018) 67 final, Brussels (2018b), <https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/staff-working-document-monitoring-implementation-european-pillar-social-rights-march2018.pdf>.

15. See European Commission, "Monitoring the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights", SWD(2018) 67 final (2018b).



One main element for monitoring implementation of the EPSR is the Social Scoreboard.¹⁶ Built on 94 indicators grouped under three main categories,¹⁷ the scoreboard enables analysis of trends over time as well as cross-country differences, providing evidence of existing gaps and supporting both EU-wide and country-specific recommendations. Besides the monitoring of individual indicators, evidence collected across a scoreboard can help identify relationships between indicators and contribute to targeted analysis, as exemplified by the thematic factsheets produced by the European Commission.¹⁸

The approach used for the EPSR Social Scoreboard is similarly applied in other policy domains. For instance, within the European Semester, the *Alert Mechanism Report* identifies member states' macroeconomic imbalances based on evidence collected from a scoreboard of 14 indicators, among other information. Internationally, scoreboards are used for monitoring implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, as well as for the World Trade Organization's Trade Policy Review Mechanism.

What Dimensions to Consider?

Similar to the Social Scoreboard under the EPSR, the migration policy scoreboard would monitor member states' contributions vis-à-vis overall EU objectives in asylum and migration policy.

In light of the principle of solidarity, contributions can take various forms, for instance, participation in relocation schemes, funds allotted throughout the EU budget to offset the costs of the most exposed member states as in the Internal Security Fund, or even personnel for operational support.¹⁹ Increasing legal opportunities for migration, for both humanitarian and work reasons, could also count as contributions to the overall goal of facilitating orderly and safe migration to the EU (Back-

haus et al. 2019; Barslund et al. 2019a; 2019b). Potential (temporary) solidarity mechanisms related to the relocation of asylum seekers from member states under pressure is another important example of a contribution in terms of sharing responsibilities.²⁰

As explained, the greater the level of detail and harmonisation of information available, the better to understand migration to the EU in its features and track its changes. The level of detail achievable ultimately depends on the willingness and ambition of member states and the EU in enhancing cooperation on this policy area, as well as on the capacity of agencies and personnel in collecting and processing data.

As an example, indicators could be grouped into three main dimensions:

1. current pressure on member states – search and rescue operations, number of arrivals, first-time applications and the rate of return of individuals ordered to leave;
2. member state contributions in expanding legal opportunities for migration – resettlements, humanitarian visas issued, number of first-time residence permits issued to non-EU nationals for education and professional purposes, and participation in intra-EU relocation schemes; and
3. member state contributions to funding – external funds like the EU Trust Fund for Africa, EU initiatives like the Border and Coast Guard (including by providing personnel) and support for the integration of refugees in other member states or non-EU countries.

Ideally, member states would not contribute exclusively to one specific dimension (or indeed, to only a specific indicator of a dimension) as such cherry-picking would make it less likely that, between them, member states cover all the relevant dimensions of asylum and migration policy. Helpfully, the set-up of the European Semester allows for several rounds of consultations and provides multiple opportunities to bring to bear moral suasion and peer pressure on any member state whose contributions fall unreasonably short of what is needed.

16. For details on the Social Scoreboard, see <https://composite-indicators.jrc.ec.europa.eu/social-scoreboard/#about>.

17. The indicators include equal opportunities and access to the labour market, dynamic labour markets and fair working conditions, along with public support/social protection and inclusion.

18. For details, see the European Semester thematic factsheets: https://ec.europa.eu/info/business-economy-euro/economic-and-fiscal-policy-coordination/eu-economic-governance-monitoring-prevention-correction/european-semester/thematic-factsheets_en.

19. See European Parliament, "Migration and Asylum: A challenge for Europe" (2018); see also European Commission, "Migration: Solidarity within the EU" (2019).

20. An example is the joint declaration signed in autumn 2019 by Germany, Finland, France, Italy and Malta to set up a temporary solidarity mechanism for disembarkation and redistribution in the Mediterranean: <http://www.statewatch.org/news/2019/sep/eu-temporary-voluntary-relocation-mechanism-declaration.pdf>.



An Example Migration Policy Scoreboard for Monitoring Progress on The Asylum and Migration Agenda

Figure 1 presents an example of a very stylised scoreboard for monitoring member states' contributions. It reports indicators related to dimensions 1 and 2 listed above, with member states' positions relative to the EU average: the scale applies six intervals with a 50-point range up to values within 150 percent of the EU average, and then progressively increases the range to capture outliers on the right-hand side of the distribution. For a meaningful comparison, the values have been scaled to per capita terms.

The indicators displayed have been grouped according to the main policy areas: asylum, irregular migration and regular pathways. Across these dimensions, the heat map immediately identifies member states exposed to disproportionate pressure vs those positioned consistently below the EU average and which could thus increase their contributions in solidarity with other member states. At the same time, a low value relative to the EU average (e.g. below 50 percent) might also capture a limited capacity to carry out a specific task (e.g. processing asylum applications and enforcing returns). In other words, the heat map might in this case identify task-specific inefficiencies rather than a lack of political will to contribute to European policies.

The suggested migration policy scoreboard has a time dimension (in our example, 2017 vs 2013) that would naturally evolve into a useful tracking device if the monitoring exercise were conducted annually. The system of indicators additionally lends itself to being extended to quarterly or monthly data, enabling the information to be used as a basis for short-term policy adjustments or interventions as requested by the stakeholders consulted during the preparation of the proposal by the European Commission for a new regulation on data on migration.²¹

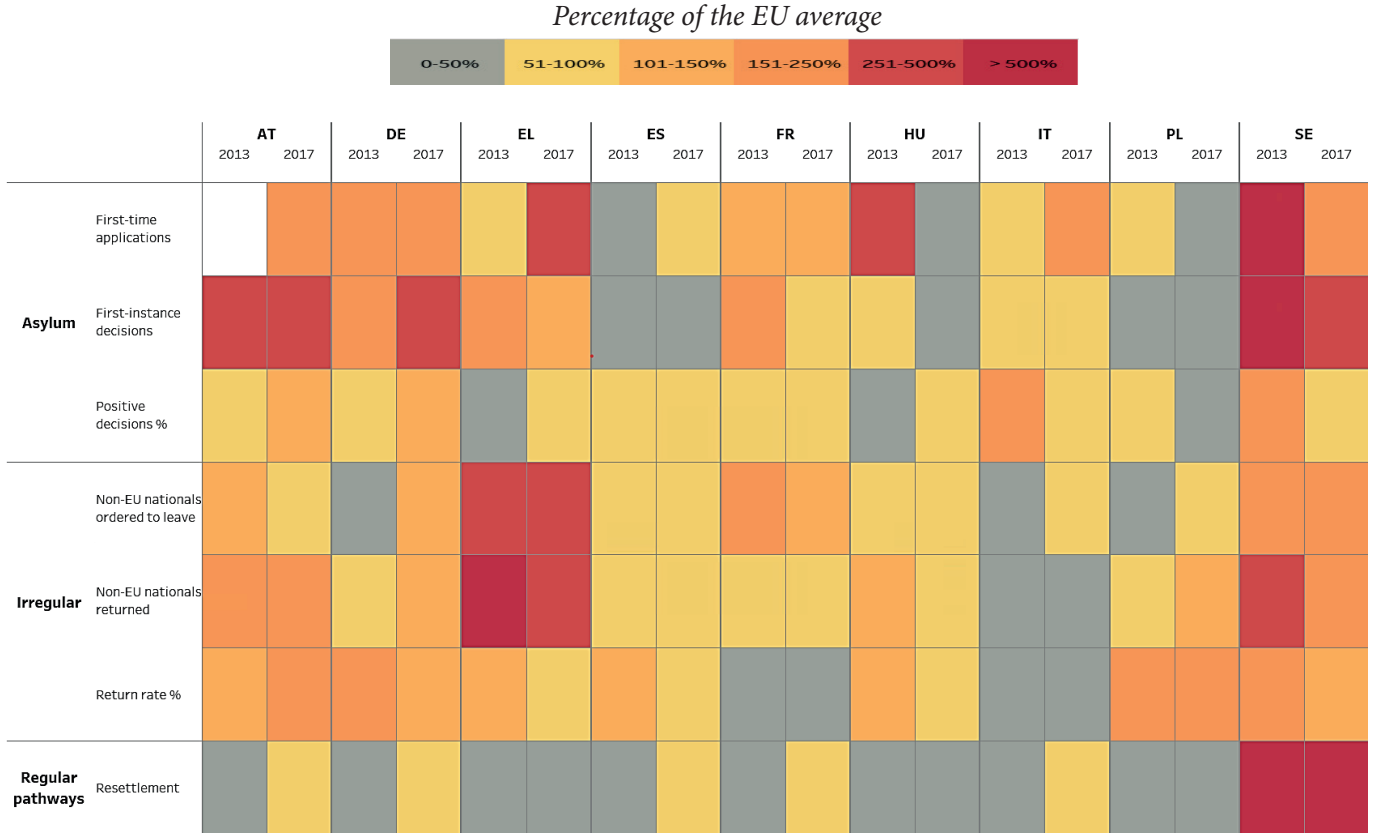
Clearly, this is just a schematic example and a complete migration policy scoreboard should have a more comprehensive set of indicators that includes member state contributions to European actions worldwide related to refugee protection as well as tailored external funding (dimension 3). However, even this small example is informative. Countries like Greece, Sweden and Germany have been disproportionately exposed to inflows

of asylum seekers (i.e. first-time applications and first instance decisions). By contrast, member states diverge rather less on the acceptance rate of asylum applications, with only Italy and Sweden going above 150 percent of the EU average in 2013. For other indicators, the distribution of member states is skewed, such as for resettlement, for which Sweden is an outlier. A low return rate combined with a high number of orders to leave (e.g. in France and Italy) points to possible difficulties in carrying out returns.

21. See European Commission, Proposal on Community statistics, COM(2018) 307 (2018a).



Figure 1. Stylised scoreboard



Source: Own elaboration based on Eurostat – Asylum and Migration [migr].

Note: AT = Austria; BE = Belgium; DE = Germany; EL = Greece; ES = Spain; FR = France; HU = Hungary; IT = Italy; PL = Poland; and SE = Sweden



Conclusion

Migration will continue to be an important policy area for the EU. Managing it requires a comprehensive policy response involving a large number of actors. For policies to be effective, member states need to work together in several policy areas, including on asylum and return, refugee resettlement, border management and policies on legal migration. Effective policies can only build on detailed and timely information; and in many areas data collection is currently missing or too infrequent. The New Pact for Migration provides an impetus for improving this across all member states.

Migration policy is a complex and politically sensitive issue with a broad range of views in all member states. Given their historical and geographical differences it is perhaps natural that member states are finding it difficult to reach an agreement on uniform policy actions across all member states. No matter the exact shape of a future reform of EU migration policy, it will contain a mix of responsibilities at the central level of the European Commission and the member state level of governance. Some elements will be based on voluntary participation (e.g. resettlement policy), while others will naturally fall on certain member states (e.g. first reception).

Therefore, there is a need for a formal mechanism embedded in the current institutional framework that can monitor migration policy at the EU and member state levels. A migration policy scoreboard – built on relevant indicators – can serve this function.

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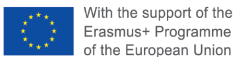
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