

Emigra Worldwide



The Refugee Crisis' Impact on Corporate Immigration in Europe



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Opening Your World of Immigration

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In a world where civil unrest, persecution and repression happens somewhere every day, people find themselves searching for a better life for their family. It is sometimes difficult to understand how impossible life can be in a place which you once called your home, when the only hope for survival is to leave.

“The simple truth is that refugees would not risk their lives on a journey so dangerous if they could thrive where they are.” – Melissa Fleming, United Nations High Commissioner of Refugees, June 2015.

PAST REFUGEE CRISIS IN EUROPE

Europe’s present reaction to refugees can be traced to the beginning of the 20th century. World War I (1914-1918) gave rise to internally displaced persons and refugees. United Kingdom borders were tightly controlled, and people who did



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not have papers showing a right to be in the UK were deported. In other parts of Europe, borders blurred. As enemy occupation changed throughout Europe during the war, towns, villages and cities were often raided and the requirement for identification papers or passports was a necessity for survival. Families moved by hundreds of thousands from one country to another with in the wake of retreating troops to avoid the conflict.

With the onset of war, people (armed forces and civilians) from European colonies were brought in to fight or provide manpower for war-related industries across Europe. People came from various

countries, including India, China, Algeria, Morocco, Indochina, Egypt South Africa, Tunisia, West Africa and Madagascar.

The aftermath of the war left an estimated 9 million prisoners of war in overcrowded camps, and many families were separated, having lost loved ones. Countries in Europe lost or gained land. As borders changed, people found themselves living in a different country from the one at the beginning of the war, even though they had not moved. The refugee crisis spread across Europe impacting many countries including Russia, Poland, Serbia, Belgium, Germany, Lithuania, Armenia, France and the UK. Migrants from the colonies also found themselves living in a foreign country, and many were unable to return home. Hundreds of thousands of people were both internally and externally displaced. Europe embraced the humanitarian, social and political environment resulting from the large number of displaced people and refugees.

However, no matter how traumatic the First World War was, World War II (1939-1945) was far more devastating. At the end of World War II, there were over 40 million refugees in Europe. Many people had survived the atrocities of the war, but were not able to return home due to persecution, repression or because their homes no longer existed. In 1943, organizations were established and laws, rules and regulations were put in place to manage the humanitarian effort to rehome people. This became the foundation of today’s global refugee support structure.

Although these wars were generations ago, the documentation of these events in books, television and movies provides people and their respective governments much to reflect upon. This has influenced both public and private sector reaction to the current influx of refugees.

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REFUGEE AND ASYLUM STATISTICAL DATA

New data from EUROSTAT for asylum applications, shown in Table 1 below, shows numbers rivaling ones experienced during the world wars. The number of asylum applications received in the EU for non-EU persons has risen from 2013 through 2017, along with a breakdown of “first time” applications.

YEAR	TOTAL ASYLUM APPLICATIONS	FIRST TIME APPLICANTS
2013	431,100	367,800
2014	627,000	562,700
2015	1,322,800	1,257,000
2016	1,260,900	1,206,100
2017	704,600	649,900

Table 1 – EUROSTAT Statistics of European Asylum Applications - 2013-2017

2015 saw the highest number of migrants and refugees moving to Europe. It became known as “The European Refugee Crisis.” According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), Table 2 below shows that 1,011,712 people made the journey across the Mediterranean Sea with 3,770 losing their lives or feared missing. The year saw a rise from around 5,000 people journeying across the Mediterranean Sea in January 2015 to an astounding 221,000 in October 2015; people were mainly from Syria, Afghanistan or Iraq, all countries with ongoing conflicts¹.

Despite the formidable challenges and dangers of crossing the Mediterranean Sea, people continue to arrive to Europe via this route. Statistics from the IOM below shows that there’s been a decrease in the number of people crossing the sea, but the comparative number of deaths has increased from approximately 0.37% in 2015 to 2.25% to date in 2018.²

YEAR	TOTAL ARRIVING BY SEA	TOTAL FEARED DEAD/MISSING
2015	1,011,712	3770 (0.37%)
2016	390,432	5143 (1.31%)
2017	186,768	3116 (1.67%)
2018 (1 Jan to 2 Sept 2018)	68,852	1549 (2.25%)

Table 2 – IOM Mediterranean Sea Crossing - 2015 to September 2, 2018

Across Europe, Austria, Germany, Hungary, Greece, Italy and Sweden continue to receive large numbers of refugees, and the European political arena is experiencing conflict. Segregated discussions between countries are taking place around the management of the continued influx of refugees into Europe, with no indications of any imminent decisions.

¹ Operational Portal Refugee Situations. UHNCR, (October 2015)., <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean>

² Missing Migrants: Tracking Deaths along Migratory Routes. IOM, (September 2018)., <http://missingmigrants.iom.int/region/mediterranean>

THE IMPACT OF CORPORATE IMMIGRATION PROCESSES – DELAYS AND UNCERTAINTY

In the autumn of 2015, German Chancellor Angela Merkel allowed Syrian refugees registered in other European countries to enter and register in Germany, contrary to EU law. Shortly thereafter, thousands of refugees from Hungary entered Germany, facilitated by the relaxation of border controls with Austria.

German authorities were not prepared for the high volume of refugees seeking assistance in 2015, and the subsequent impact this would have on the majority of local immigration offices, which had insufficient resources to manage the large number of asylum applications. For companies bringing talent into Germany, this had a material impact on application processing times for all visa types. In addition, immigration appointments for people already in Germany were seriously delayed; some offices only offered available appointments six to eight months in advance. Although the German immigration authorities have sought to increase their resources over the last few years, there continues to be major delays in processing times.

Likewise, Italy has seen a steep rise in the number of asylum applications since 2015, due to Italy's geographical location relative to the Mediterranean Sea. The processing of migrants in Italy requires assessments to be made of each individual, which has had a detrimental effect on the resources available to manage normal business visa processing.

While the number of applications is falling year by year, the backlog remains high: 954,100 claims are awaiting a decision, including 443,640 in Germany, according to the EU asylum office.

This continues to have a ripple effect on all immigration applications, especially in the Germany, Italy, France, Greece and the UK, countries that have accepted the most asylum claims. Delays in processing and reviewing applications have increased, and appointments for biometrics and collection of residence permit cards have been significantly delayed. For example, previously, a fingerprinting appointment would be scheduled for one month in advance, now appointments are not available for at least two to four months. These delays in processing non-asylum applications has caused businesses a marked degree of uncertainty in their ability to manoeuvre their workforce.

Did You Know?

- Germany continues to receive more asylum applications than any other European country, with 225,560 claims in 2017 alone.
- Italy, France and Greece follow closely behind.
- UK holds fifth place, with 33,780 applications, which account for 4.6% of all EU asylum claims.

A CONSERVATIVE AGENDA HAS EVOLVED

As the number of refugees to the EU reduces, the socio-political landscape changes from immigration to integration. The huge number of refugees is unprecedented and many EU countries are struggling to integrate a group of people with very different cultures, language and religion.

Most countries in EU have moved to the right of the political spectrum. There has been a huge increase in the popularity of right-wing political parties, which previously operated in the fringes. Italy now has a right-wing coalition government. The Visegrad Group are mainly governed by right-wing parties. The Netherlands, Austria and Sweden have all shifted to the right. These changes are predicted to have a huge impact on the EU Parliament election in 2019.

As EU countries continue their move to the right of the political spectrum, we will expect to see a tightening of immigration laws. This will have an impact on businesses looking to attract talent into the EU. Businesses will face increased costs and stricter migration quotas, which will impact talent resource and supply chain.

UNITED KINGDOM – THE ECONOMIC IMPACT MAY HAVE LED TO THE BREXIT VOTE

The number of asylum applications received and appeals submitted in the UK has decreased since 2015. Data released from the UK Home Office, following a request under the Freedom of Information Act, shows that although 75% of 26,547 asylum applications submitted in the UK were decided within six months, decisions for the remaining applicants is taking between one to five years³. Processing times for applications for other visa categories do not appear to have been explicitly affected by asylum applications; however, the socio-economic impact is evident and is causing much anxiety for this vulnerable population.

Businesses are faced with having to pay unprecedented, additional UK government fees towards the cost of obtaining a work visa for an employee in the UK. Costs include the Immigration Health Surcharge (200 GBP per person/per year), introduced in April 2015. This surcharge reflected an effort to illustrate to the public that non-British workers had to ‘pay their way’ amidst escalating National Health Service costs, largely attributed to the increase in asylum seekers in the UK and those seeking free medical assistance.

Other costs, such as the ‘Immigration Skills Charge,’ introduced in 2017, added an astounding fee of £1,000 per year, paid by businesses in the UK seeking to employ migrant workers. The key incentive behind this cost was to deter businesses from recruiting migrant workers and to encourage recruitment of British workers.

These changes, coupled with the UK’s general public’s perception of asylum seekers, and the anticipated humanitarian effort needed to support them, played a significant part in the Brexit vote.

CONCLUSION

Many EU countries have been affected with complex social, economic and financial challenges brought on by the influx of asylum applications. The fundamental impact to business is the inability to mobilize talent as efficiently in terms of time and cost as previously experienced. This in turn affects the ability to deliver on contracts and win new business. Having resources on the ground in today’s ‘need it yesterday’ culture is a decisive factor for any business venture considering Europe. Combined with other political incentives, increased costs and prominently the uncertainty that Brexit brings, undoubtedly the legacy of the refugee crisis will continue to affect immigration for many years to come.

³ Migration Statistics Quarterly Report. Office for National Statistics, (August 2018).

www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/internationalmigration/bulletins/migrationstatisticsquarterlyreport/august2018

Who are Emigra Worldwide and Emigra Ogletree Worldwide?

Emigra Group, LLC, a privately held firm based in Vienna, Virginia, inclusive of its subsidiaries in 14 countries (collectively “Emigra Worldwide”), is a specialist in immigration program management for multinational companies. Emigra Group, LLC provides immigration assistance into the U.S. through Emigra Ogletree Worldwide. Emigra Ogletree Worldwide (EOW) is a partnership between Ogletree Deakins, one of the nation’s largest labor, employment, and immigration law firms, and Emigra Worldwide, the largest stand-alone global visa provider in the world. Managing corporate immigration programs and cases is our only business, and we are a clear market leader with experience handling tens of thousands of immigration cases in a total of more than 110 countries worldwide. Emigra Worldwide and Emigra Ogletree Worldwide do not provide consultation on tax, employment law, customs and excise, or other matters that may be of interest or concern with regard to international travel. We are pleased to refer interested parties to qualified counsel for advice on these matters.