



The integration of immigrants and legal paths to mobility to the EU:

Some surprising (and encouraging) facts

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The integration of immigrants is an issue that has been of concern to a large number of EU member states and the European institutions themselves. In particular, the challenge of how to quantify or measure immigrant integration has been especially complicated.

In the past, there was not a lot of evidence documenting the integration of immigrants one way or the other in their new country of residence, but thanks to recent data reported by the EU's statistical agency Eurostat, we can now compare the experience of first- and second-generation immigrants with that of native-born EU citizens.

Education and employment of second generation immigrants

On the basis of data obtained from the EU Labour Force Survey from 2014,¹ Eurostat published an analysis of the educational attainment and employment of second generation immigrants in the EU, from which we can extrapolate how well or badly these individuals are being integrated in their newly adopted societies.²

¹ See Eurostat, "EU labour force survey", *Statistics Explained*, http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/EU_labour_force_survey. See specifically the 2014 ad-hoc module of the EU LFS on "Migration and labour market".

² Eurostat (2016), "Second generation immigrants in the EU generally very well integrated into the labour market", Eurostat News Release 213/2016, Eurostat, Luxembourg, 28 October (<http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/2995521/7724025/3-28102016-BP-EN.pdf/6e144b14-d5e1-499e-a271-2d70a10ed6fe>). Note that, according to Eurostat, three EU Member States did not participate in the 2014 EU LFS: Denmark, Ireland and the Netherlands; see Eurostat (2015), "The labour market situation of migrants and their immediate descendants: Evaluation of the 2014 labour force survey ad hoc module", Eurostat, Luxembourg, December, p. 7 http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/1978984/6037334/Evaluation_report_AHM_2014.pdf.

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In 2014, 82.4% of the EU population aged 15–64 were “native-born with native backgrounds”,³ 11.5% were “first generation immigrants”⁴ and 6.1% were considered as “second generation immigrants”.⁵ Among the immigrants in the latter classification, 4.4% had at least one parent born outside the EU and 1.7% had both parents born outside the EU.⁶

In absolute terms, the largest numbers of second generation immigrants in the EU are resident in France (30.7%), the United Kingdom (20.5%), Germany (15.7%), Italy (5.1%) and Belgium (4.3%) (see Figure 1).

The highest proportion of second generation immigrants in the EU lives in Estonia, Latvia, Luxembourg, France, Slovenia, Belgium, Sweden and Croatia, ranging from 21.4% in Estonia to 10.3% in Croatia (see Figure 2). One might not immediately see the connections or links between these countries as regard migration, their characteristics being quite distinct.

For Germany, no micro data are available on the *country of birth* of the parents of persons born outside of Germany; see Eurostat (2015), “2014. Migration and labour market (lfsa_14), Reference Metadata in Euro SDMX Metadata Structure (ESMS)”, Eurostat, Luxembourg (http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/cache/metadata/en/lfsa_14_esms.htm).

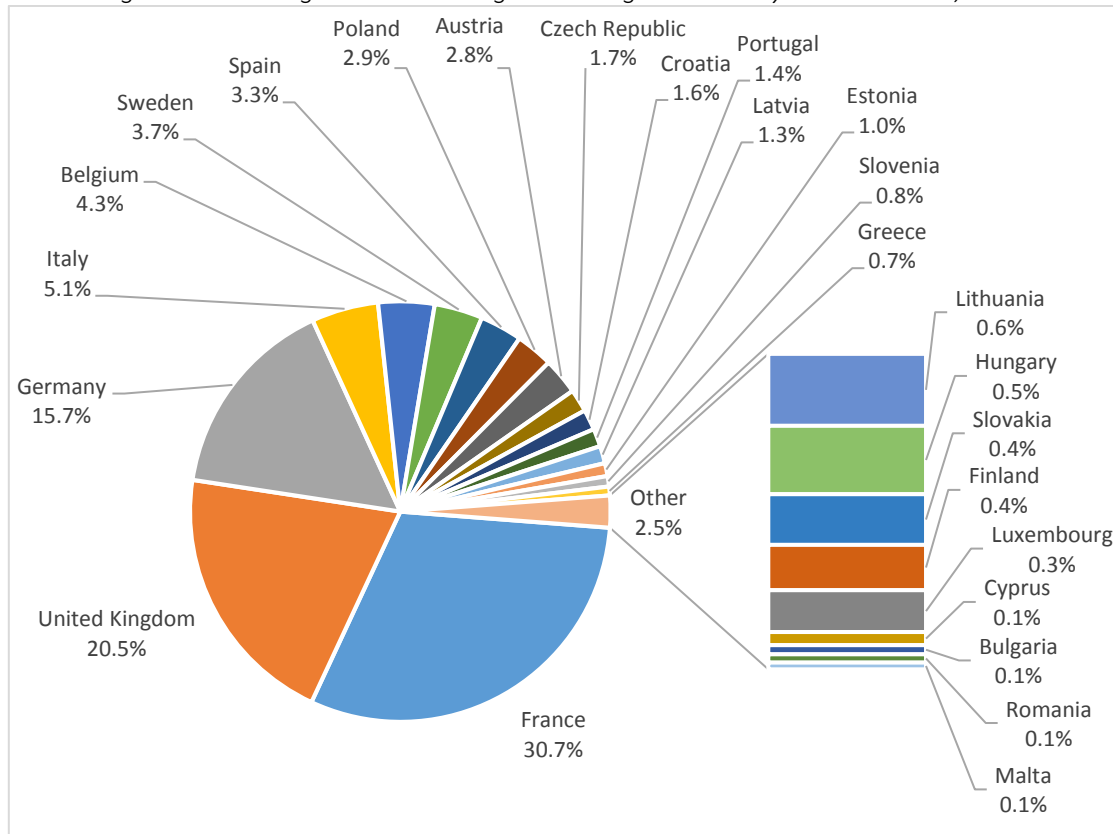
³ Eurostat defines “native-born persons with native background” as persons who were born in the EU Member State of their *residence*, and both of whose parents were also born in the *same* EU Member State.

⁴ Eurostat defines “first generation immigrants” as persons who were born outside of their EU Member State of *residence*.

⁵ Eurostat defines “second generation immigrants” as persons who were born in the EU Member State of their *residence*, and both of whose parents were born *outside* of this EU Member State of *residence*. The EU LFS 2014 module on “Migration and labour market” further makes a distinction between second generation immigrants of “mixed” (i.e. at least one parent born in the same Member State of *residence*), and “foreign” (i.e. both parents born outside of the Member State of *residence*) backgrounds.

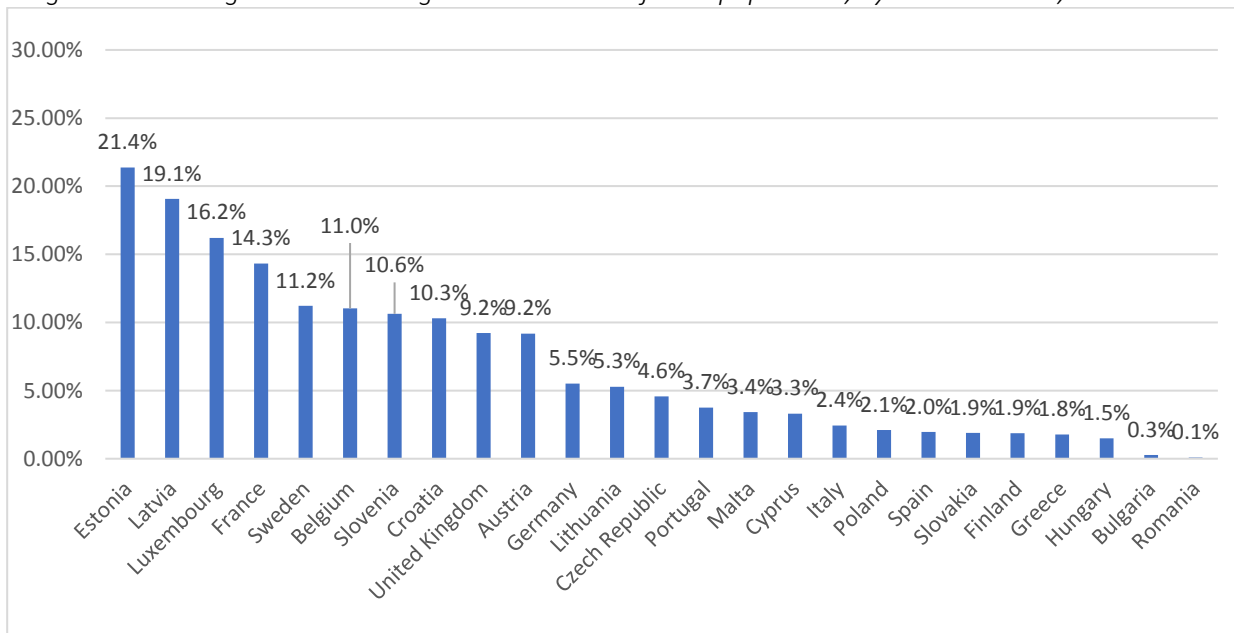
⁶ Eurostat (2016), “Second generation immigrants in the EU generally very well integrated into the labour market”, op. cit., p. 1.

Figure 1. Second generation immigrants living in the EU by member state, 2014



Source: Authors' own elaboration based on Eurostat's "Population by sex, age, migration status, country of birth and country of birth of parents (lfsa_14pcobp)" dataset.

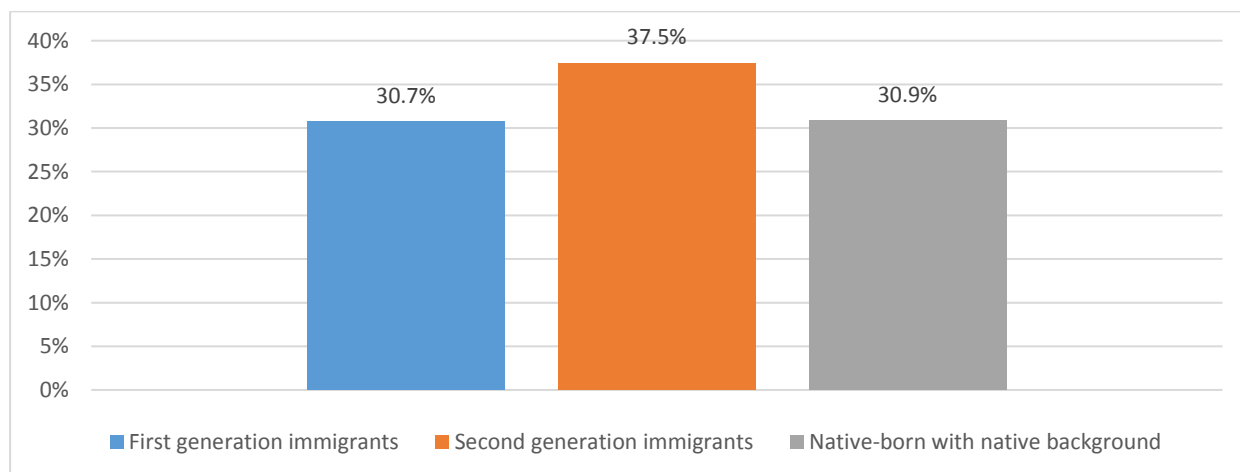
Figure 2. Second generation immigrants as a share of total population, by member state, 2014



Source: Authors' own elaboration based on Eurostat's "Population by sex, age, migration status, country of birth and country of birth of parents (lfsa_14pcobp)" dataset.

What do the Eurostat statistics tell us about educational attainment and employment of second generation immigrants? Looking only at the age group 25-54, 37.5% of second generation immigrants had tertiary educational attainment (completion of tertiary studies), compared with 30.9% in the so-called native population (see Figure 3). For second generation immigrants with an “EU background”, this proportion is even higher.⁷

Figure 3. Tertiary educational attainment of persons aged 25-54 in the EU by migration status, 2014



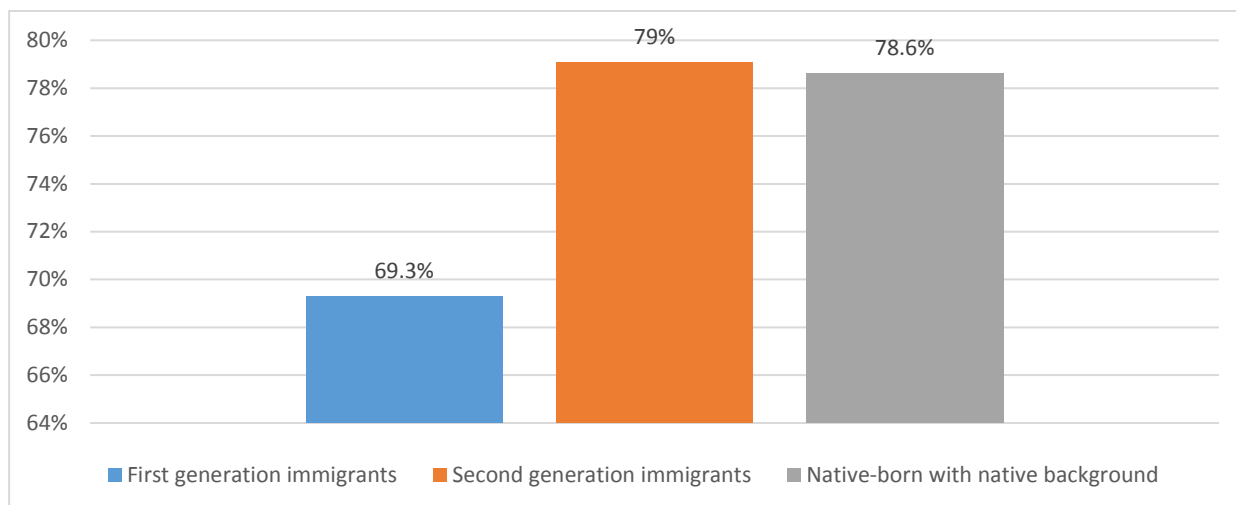
Source: Authors' own elaboration based on Eurostat's "Educational attainment level (ISCED11) distribution by sex, age, migration status and educational attainment level of parents (ISCED11F) (lfso_14beduc)" dataset.

The data further indicate that second generation immigrants in the EU have a higher employment rate (~79%) than the native-born population with native background (78.6%), as shown in Figure 4. In terms of the employment rate, the difference between second generation immigrants with an “EU background” and native-born with native backgrounds is even higher.⁸

⁷ According to Eurostat, 38.5% of second generation immigrants with an “EU background” have tertiary educational attainment; see Eurostat (2016), “Second generation immigrants in the EU generally very well integrated into the labour market”, op. cit., p. 2.

⁸ According to Eurostat, the proportion of second-generation immigrants with a mixed background employed in the EU is around 81.1%; see Eurostat (2016), “Second generation immigrants in the EU generally very well integrated into the labour market”, op. cit., p. 4.

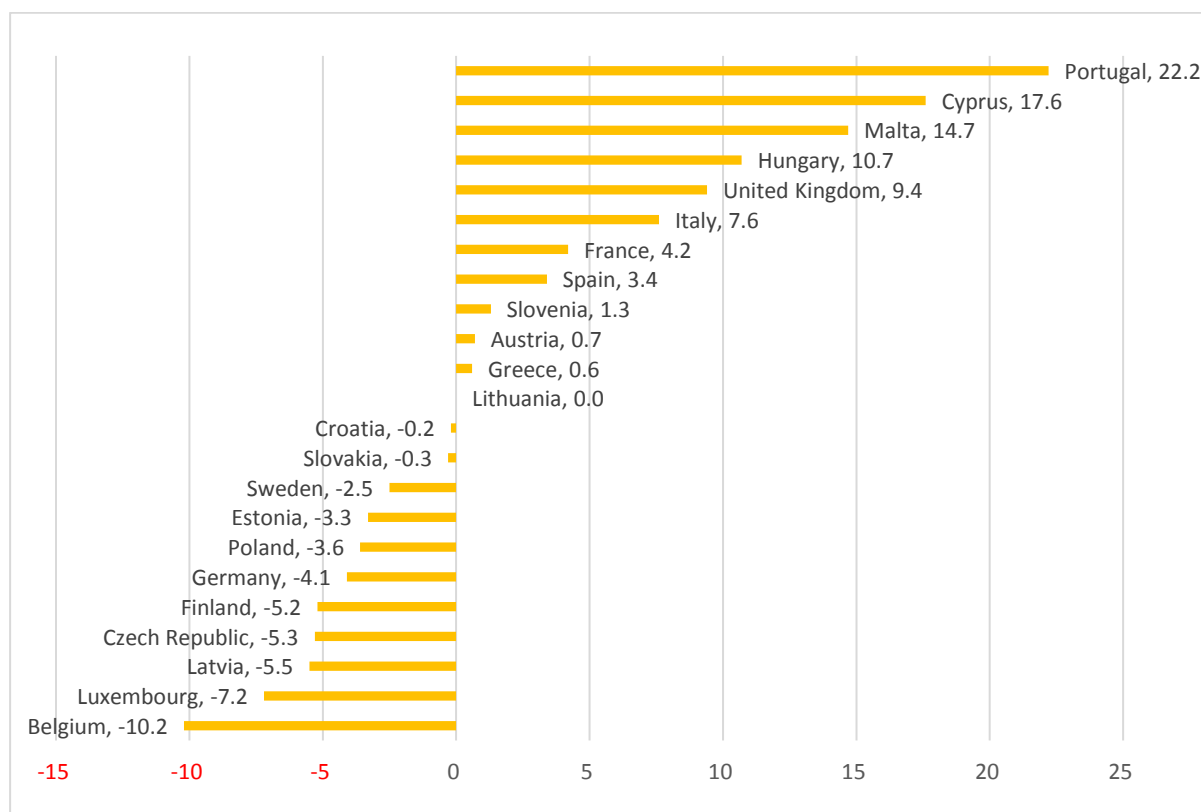
Figure 4. Employment rate of persons aged 25-54 in the EU by migration status, 2014



Source: Authors' own elaboration based on Eurostat's "Employment rate by sex, age, migration status, citizenship and educational attainment level (lfso_14lempr)" dataset.

A closer look at the data shows some important differences among the member states in terms of educational attainment and employment rate of second generation immigrants. The highest tertiary educational attainment among second generation immigrants compared to native-born with native background is in Portugal, Cyprus, Malta, Hungary, the UK and Italy. The lowest are found in Belgium, Luxembourg, Latvia and the Czech Republic, as shown in Figure 5.

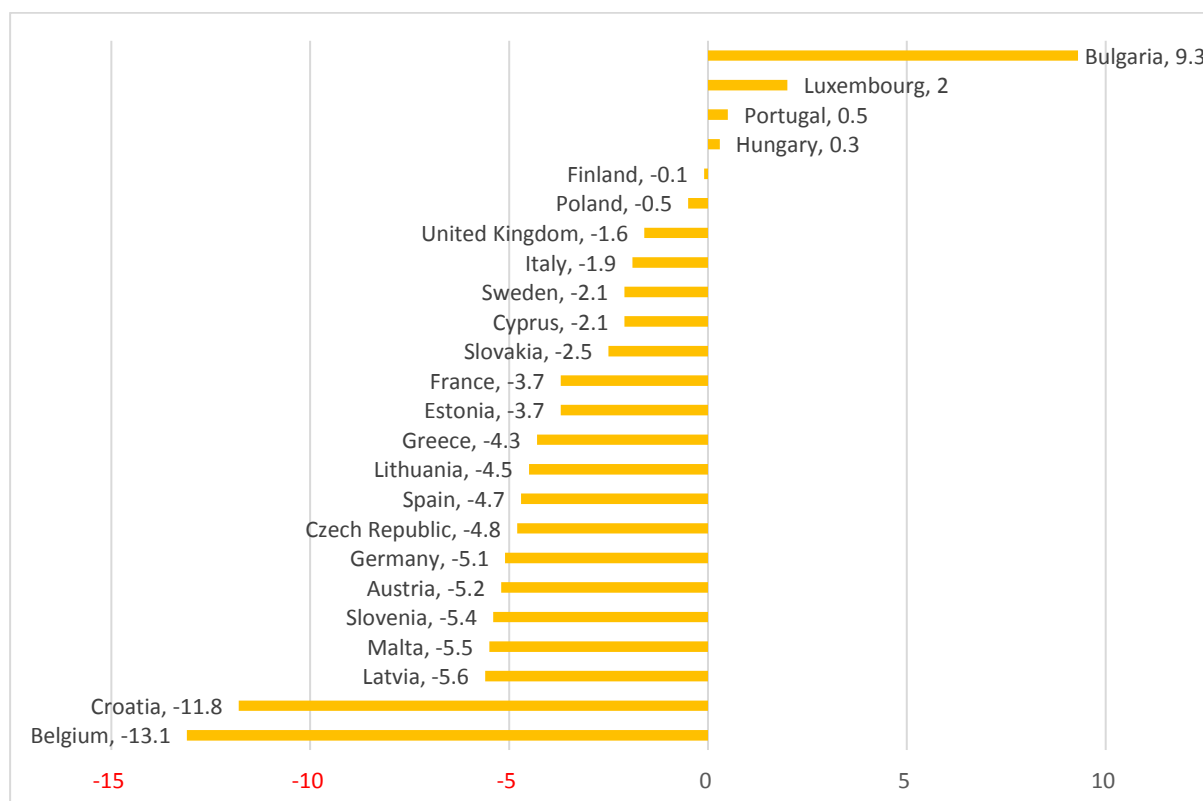
Figure 5. Difference in tertiary educational attainment between second generation immigrants and native-born with native background by EU member state, 2014 (as %-points difference)



Source: Authors' own elaboration based on Eurostat's "Educational attainment level (ISCED11) distribution by sex, age, migration status and educational attainment level of parents (ISCED11F) (lfso_14beduc)" dataset.

In terms of employment rate, the largest difference in favour of second generation immigrants compared to native-born with native background was in Bulgaria (9.3% points). Second generation immigrants also have a higher employment rate than native-born with native background in Luxembourg, Portugal and Hungary. In Belgium, Croatia, Latvia, Malta, Slovenia, Austria and Germany, second generation immigrants had a lower employment rate – at least 5% points lower – than their counterparts with a native background (see Figure 6).

Figure 6. Difference in employment rate between second generation immigrants and native-born with native background in EU member states, 2014 (as %-points difference)



Source: Authors' own elaboration based on Eurostat's "Employment rate by sex, age, migration status, citizenship and educational attainment level (lfso_14lempr)" dataset.

So do we need to worry so much about how to integrate immigrant populations in our societies and whether our educational systems and labour markets actually do a good job for us in this regard? It seems that we should have more confidence in our public services and labour markets to assist "second generation immigrants" achieve their potential than some of our press would lead us to believe.

First residence permits in the EU

EUROSTAT has also recently published a brief analysis of its data on the issue of first residence permits by the member states.⁹ What story do these statistics tell us about legal mobility paths to the EU?

In 2015, EU member states issued a total of 2.6 million first residence permits, up 12.1% from the previous year.¹⁰ According to EUROSTAT the reason for the increase was mainly a result of more residence permits being issued for employment reasons (up 23.5% from the previous year).¹¹ The main reason for the issue of a first residence permit in the EU remains family reunification, at 28.9% of all the first residence permits issued. This is followed closely by employment, at 27.2%.¹²

EUROSTAT tells us that one in four of all first residence permits in 2015 was issued by the UK (24.3%) – the largest single source of new permits. Second comes Poland, which issued one in five (20.8%) of all first permits. It is of course the small member states that issued the most residence permits relative to their population, headed by Malta (23.1 first residence permits per thousand population) and Cyprus (18.4).¹³

The United Kingdom and Poland were also the two member states that have issued the largest number of first residence permits for reasons of remunerated activities (hereinafter: employment reasons), followed by France, Sweden and Germany (see Figure 7).¹⁴ In proportion to the resident population, the top five member states issuing first residence permits for employment reasons in 2015 were Malta (6.2 per thousand population), Cyprus (4.0), Sweden (4.0), Poland (3.3) and the UK (3.0).¹⁵

⁹ Eurostat (2016), “EU Member States issued a record number of 2.6 million first residence permits in 2015”, Eurostat News Releases 211/2016, Eurostat, Luxembourg, 27 October, <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/2995521/7715617/3-27102016-BP-EN.pdf/ca706fa0-14fc-4b71-a2e2-46b2b933f8f8>.

¹⁰ Eurostat (2016), “EU Member States issued a record number of 2.6 million first residence permits in 2015”, op. cit., p. 1.

¹¹ Ibid.

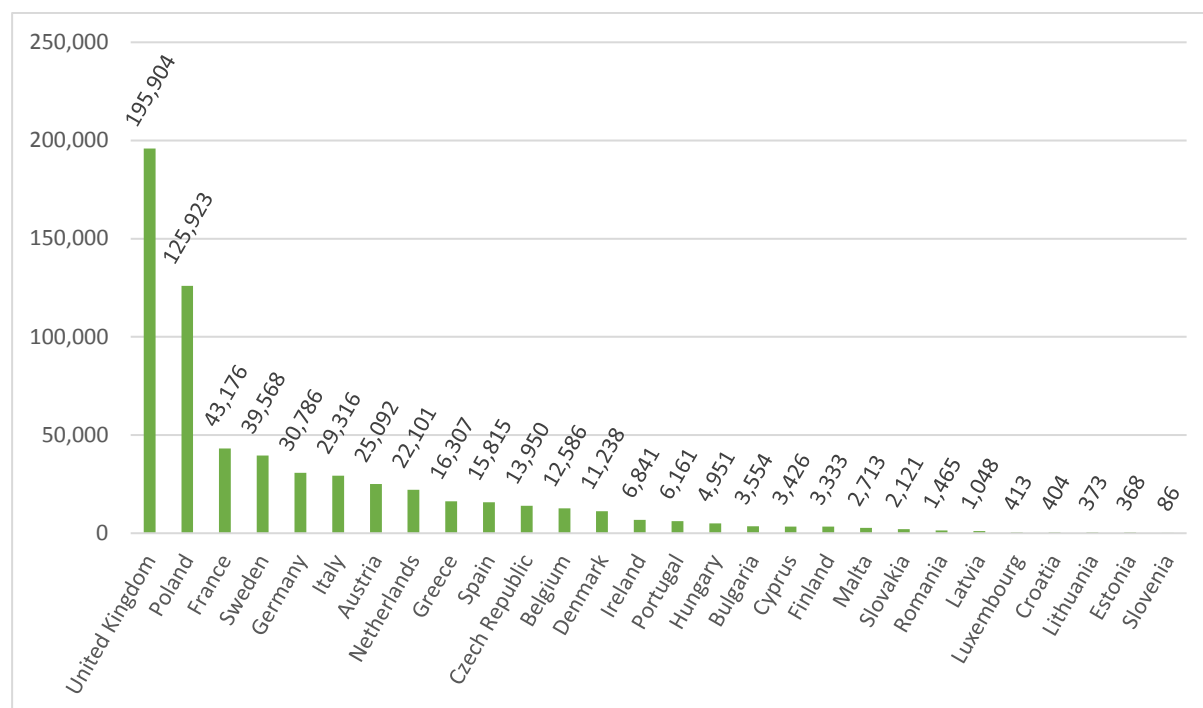
¹² Eurostat (2016), “EU Member States issued a record number of 2.6 million first residence permits in 2015”, op. cit., p. 1.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ See also Eurostat (2016), “EU Member States issued a record number of 2.6 million first residence permits in 2015”, op. cit., p. 2.

¹⁵ Authors’ own calculation based on data from the following datasets of Eurostat: “First permits by reason, age, sex and citizenship (migr_resfas)” and “Population change – Demographic balance and crude rates at national level (demo_gind)”.

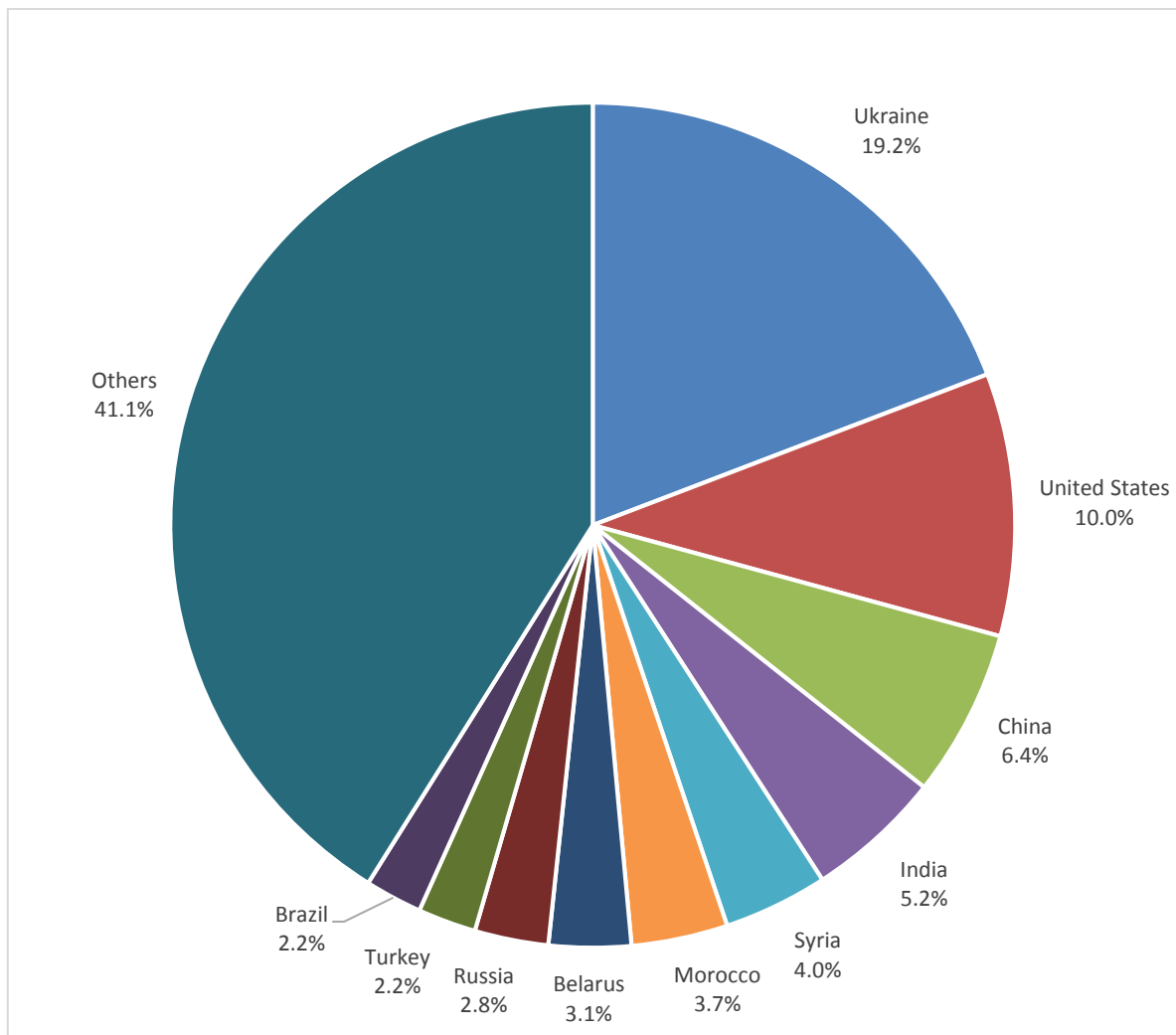
Figure 7. Number of first residence permits issued for employment reasons in EU member states, 2015



Source: Authors' own elaboration based on Eurostat's "First permits by reason, length of validity and citizenship (migr_resfirst)" dataset.

The largest single nationality granted first residence permits in the EU were the Ukrainians (~500,000), with almost one in five first residence permits issued to them. This is closely followed by US nationals (~262,000), Chinese (~167,000), Indians (~136,000), Syrians (~104,000), Moroccans (~96,000) and Belarusians (~82,000) (see Figure 8).

Figure 8. Top-10 nationalities granted first residence permits in the EU, 2015

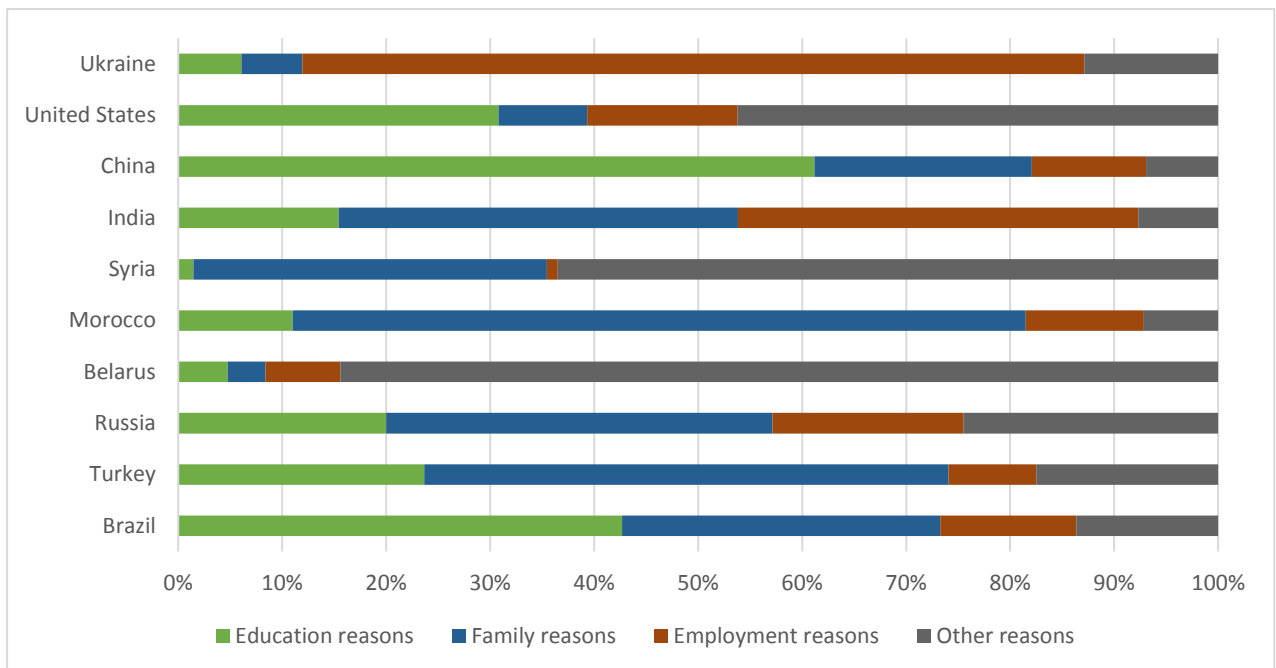


Source: Authors' own elaboration based on Eurostat's "First permits by reason, length of validity and citizenship (migr_resfirst)" dataset.

The reasons for issuing first residence permits in the EU to these top ten beneficiary citizenships is noteworthy (see Figure 9). More than three-quarters (~376,000) of the first residence permits issued to Ukrainians in 2015 were for employment reasons. US nationals were primarily issued first residence permits in the EU for education and other reasons. Moroccans were largely issued first residence permits for family reasons (70.5%), while the Chinese were predominantly issued first residence permits for education reasons (61.2%). The majority of first residence permits issued to Syrians and Belarusians in 2015 were for other reasons (63.5% and 84.4%, respectively).¹⁶

¹⁶ See Eurostat (2016), "EU Member States issued a record number of 2.6 million first residence permits in 2015", op. cit., p. 3.

Figure 9. Top-10 nationalities granted first residence permits in the EU, by reason, 2015



Note: A similar figure to this one can be found in Eurostat (2016), “EU Member States issued a record number of 2.6 million first residence permits in 2015”, op. cit., p. 3.

Source: Authors’ own elaboration based on Eurostat’s “First permits by reason, length of validity and citizenship (migr_resfirst)” dataset.

A few member states represent the main source of first residence permits issued to these top ten nationalities (see Table 1). In 2015, Poland issued the majority of first residence permits to *Ukrainians* (86.0%) and *Belarusians* (91.9%), while the United Kingdom issued the most first residence permits to *US* (76.8%), *Chinese* (48.3%), and *Indian nationals* (52.9%). *Moroccans* were issued first residence permits in 2015 primarily by Spain (38.7%) and France (27.6%), while Germany was responsible for the most first residence permits issued to *Turkish* nationals (32.0%). First residence permits to *Syrians* in 2015 primarily originated from Germany (25.3%) and Sweden (28.2%). *Russian* and *Brazilian* issued first residence permits in the EU were more dispersed, with no EU Member State having issued more than 20% of first residence permits to these citizens.

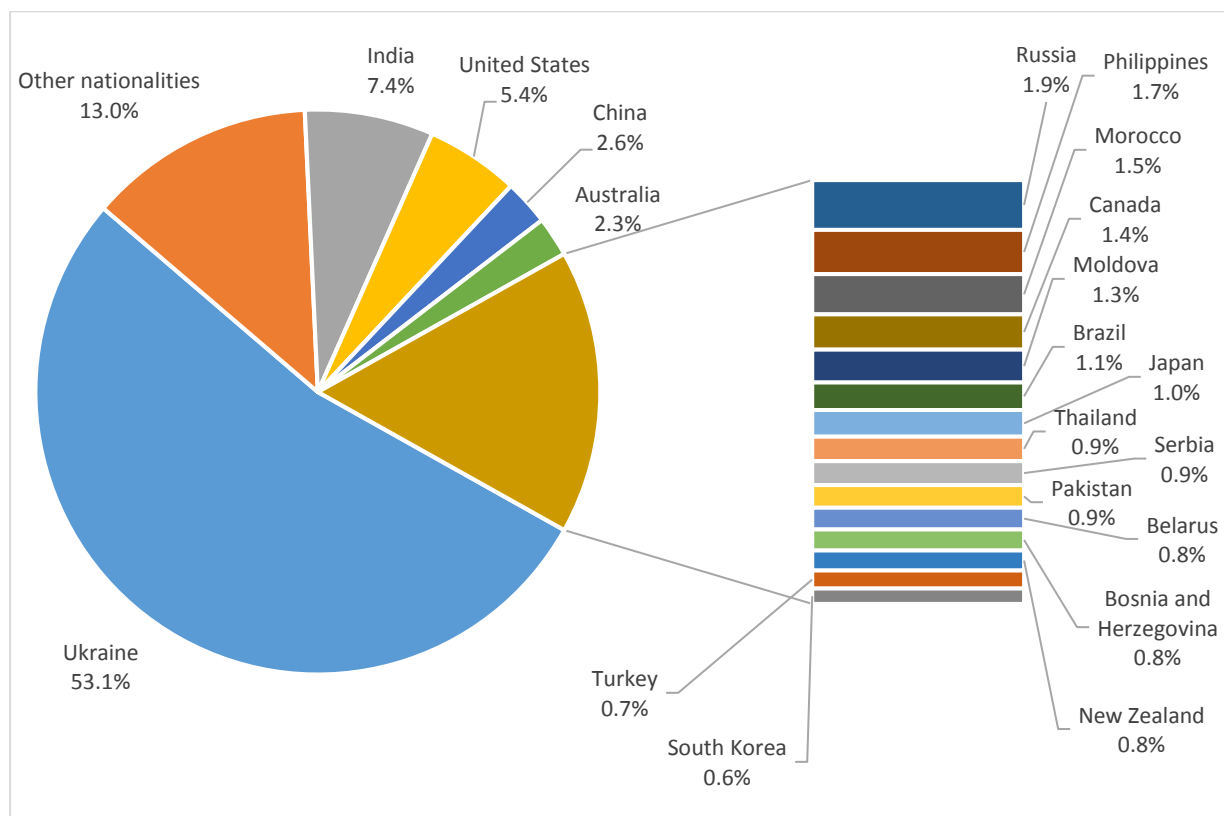
Table 1. Top-10 nationalities granted first residence permits by EU member state, 2015

	Ukraine	United States	China	India	Syria	Morocco	Belarus	Russia	Turkey	Brazil
Total	499,992	261,760	167,118	135,514	104,134	96,099	82,024	73,528	58,131	57,027
Austria	1,383	1,289	1,229	940	8,424	118	163	2,802	3,961	432
Belgium	677	2,417	1,700	2,805	4,001	5,723	101	1,078	1,990	1,167
Bulgaria	1,488	203	219	67	98	12	60	2,782	2,558	26
Cyprus	886	183	204	1,289	1,911	11	112	2,069	33	24
Czech Republic	23,207	4,195	1,255	1,291	493	70	1,148	11,289	1,364	235
Germany	5,667	7,333	8,164	9,597	26,383	4,356	1,050	9,054	18,599	3,323
Denmark	2,297	4,157	2,727	3,785	12,711	102	62	455	536	513
Estonia	1,447	161	63	107	10	4	84	970	61	26
Spain	3,809	7,383	12,581	3,402	949	37,184	278	5,813	855	6,887
Finland	1,248	917	1,737	1,586	642	138	97	3,126	497	253
France	1,863	7,019	15,005	4,588	2,528	26,544	291	4,901	5,916	5,915
United Kingdom	3,365	201,040	80,724	71,651	4,355	1,794	599	9,002	6,069	10,519
Greece	850	443	925	513	364	68	71	1,175	213	95
Croatia	116	251	132	37	95	7	18	219	72	38
Hungary	1,686	1,679	4,286	852	176	77	77	1,321	988	526
Ireland	351	2,690	2,291	2,883	192	102	54	468	363	10,955
Italy	7,850	8,714	14,722	11,585	419	16,948	580	3,816	1,913	4,107
Lithuania	1,908	79	85	210	17	5	768	1,108	58	10
Luxembourg	141	598	525	355	116	129	24	276	100	206
Latvia	1,591	132	207	353	24	5	451	2,084	39	12
Malta	297	275	370	242	304	107	24	902	158	172
Netherlands	1,129	5,747	6,193	6,942	8,766	1,357	156	1,764	3,661	1,972
Poland	430,081	754	2,526	2,392	196	89	75,394	3,932	4,226	196
Portugal	1,284	550	3,459	1,229	68	174	44	373	378	8,232
Romania	482	548	851	195	662	314	19	137	1,173	75
Sweden	1,186	2,637	4,580	6,508	29,316	650	244	1,342	1,941	1,028
Slovenia	363	159	165	35	15	3	20	531	218	31
Slovakia	3,340	207	193	75	899	8	35	739	191	52

Source: Authors' own elaboration based on Eurostat's "First permits by reason, length of validity and citizenship (migr_resfirst)" dataset.

Ukrainians represent the largest group of first residence permits issued for employment reasons, accounting for over half of the first residence permits for employment reasons issued in the EU in 2015. The next largest group of beneficiaries by nationality, namely Indian (7.4%), US (5.4%), Chinese (2.6%), and Australians (2.3%), represents less than a quarter of the total number of first residence permits issued for employment reasons in 2015 (see Figure 10).

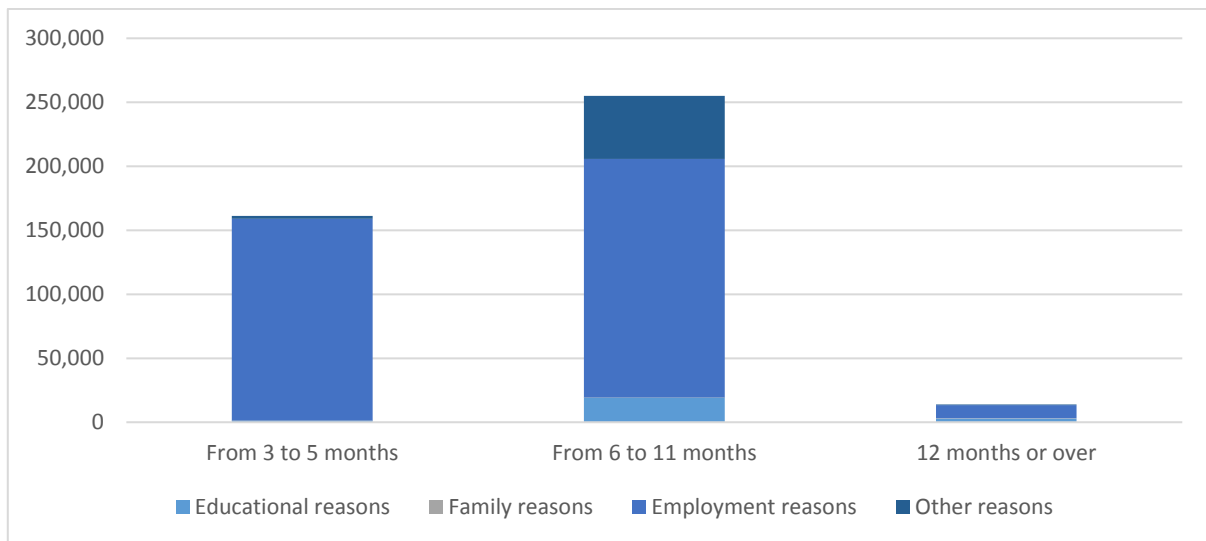
Figure 10. Top-20 nationalities granted first residence permits for employment reasons in the EU, 2015



Source: Authors' own elaboration based on Eurostat's "First permits by reason, length of validity and citizenship (migr_resfirst)" dataset.

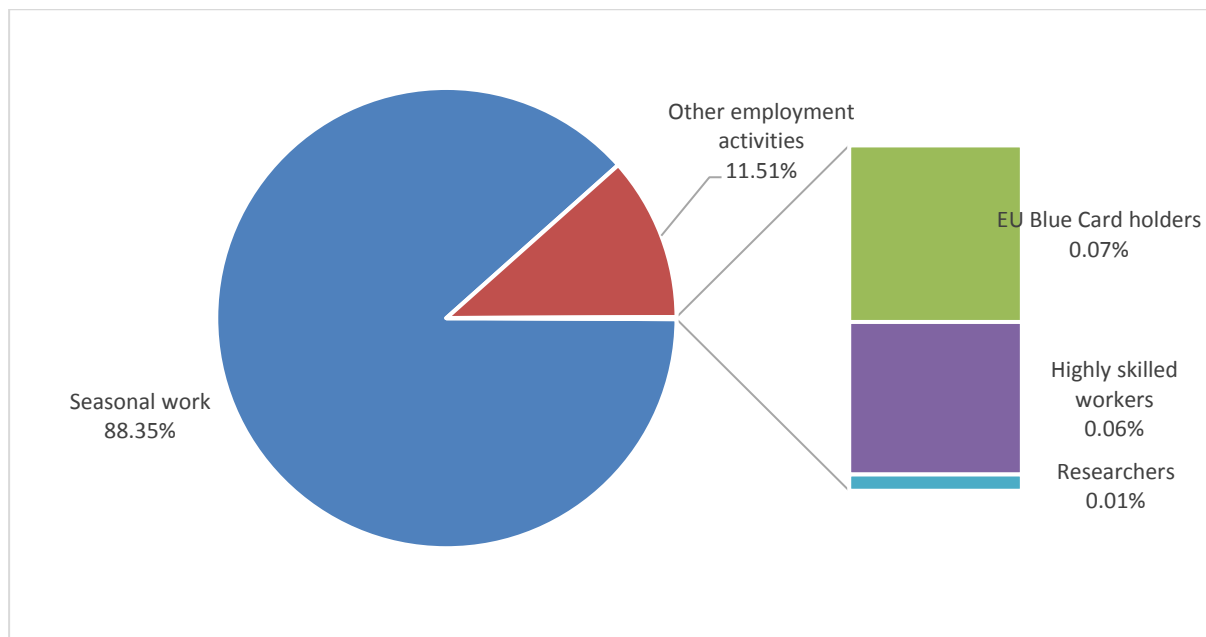
First residence permits issued by Poland to Ukrainian nationals in 2015 were primarily of a short-term (shorter than 12 months, see Figure 11) and temporary nature (mostly seasonal work, see Figure 12).

Figure 11. First residence permits issued by Poland to Ukrainians by length and reasons, 2015



Source: Authors' own elaboration based on Eurostat's "First permits by reason, length of validity and citizenship (migr_resfirst)" dataset.

Figure 12. First residence permits issued by Poland to Ukrainians for employment by employment reasons, 2015



Source: Authors' own elaboration based on Eurostat's "First permits issued for remunerated activities by reason, length of validity and citizenship (migr_resocc)" dataset.

The substantial number of Ukrainians residing and working in Poland on short-term, temporary permits contrasts sharply with the number of (Ukrainian) asylum seekers receiving protection in Poland. Previous research has shown that only two Ukrainians had been granted refugee status by mid-November 2015, with another 24 Ukrainians receiving subsidiary protection.¹⁷ This low reception rate of asylum seekers in Poland notwithstanding, the Polish government has repeatedly qualified the large number of Ukrainians granted residence in Poland as ‘refugees’ (despite their *de jure* status as immigrants).¹⁸

Szczepanik and Tylec (2016) further speculate that a potential reason for this disparity between the number of Ukrainians in Poland classified as “immigrants” as opposed to “refugees” may be the combination of strict Polish refugee law (asylum seekers have to prove “lack of the possibility of safely relocating and settling in any other part of their country of origin”), and more liberal regulations for obtaining temporary or permanent residence permits (by Ukrainians).¹⁹

Conclusion

All too often the media and political sources present the integration of migrants as a huge, sometimes even insurmountable challenge to societies in the EU. The data on both first and second generation migrants collected by Eurostat and analysed here show clearly that this image is incorrect. In fact, if educational attainment and employment are important indicators of integration, second generation migrants are better integrated into our societies than the native born with native background (in the language of Eurostat).

Clearly, migrants to the EU appear highly motivated to ensure that their children succeed in education and employment and enjoy the best conditions of integration in their new home country. This is not the image of a reluctant migrant holding onto outdated norms of a far-away country and distant time, which is often presented as the norm. Nor is it an image of failure and disappointment, but rather one evidencing success and great promise. The EU appears fully able to provide an environment favourable to successful migrant integration, and its migrants strive hard and succeed in becoming part of mainstream education and employment in their new home countries.

Another common fallacy in the discussions about migration in the EU is that the Central and Eastern European member states are the most reluctant to receive migrants. The evidence is

¹⁷ M. Szczepanik and E. Tylec (2016), “Ukrainian asylum seekers and a Polish immigration paradox”, *Forced Migration Review* 51, p. 71.

¹⁸ See EurActiv (2016), “Ukraine rejects Polish ‘million refugees’ claim”, *EurActive.com*, 21 January (<https://www.euractiv.com/section/europe-s-east/news/ukraine-rejects-polish-million-refugees-claim/>); A. Chapman (2016), “Poland quibbles over who’s a refugee and who’s a migrant”, *Politico Europe*, 22 January (<http://www.politico.eu/article/poland-quibbles-over-whos-a-refugee-and-whos-a-migrant-beata-szydlo-asylum-schengen/>); M. Sieradzka (2016), “Szydlo exaggerated on refugees from Ukraine in Poland”, *Deutsche Welle*, 28 February (<http://www.dw.com/en/szydlo-exaggerated-on-refugees-from-ukraine-in-poland/a-19080717>).

¹⁹ Szczepanik & Tylec (2016), op. cit., pp. 71-73.

to the contrary at least as regards Poland, which issues by far the largest number of first residence permits for employment purposes of all member states. In terms of countries of origin of migrants receiving first residence permits in the EU, Ukrainians appear by far first in the list, followed by US nationals, Chinese and Indians.

No doubt the turmoil in Ukraine is a central reason for the arrival of substantial numbers of these nationals in the EU. The arrival of US, Chinese and Indian nationals in the EU is a reflection of the size of those three countries and their importance as trading partners with the EU. EU member states issue more than 2.5 million first residence permits to migrants every year and for good reason – these migrants benefit European societies and economies.