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**Thinking beyond the crisis:
Future governance of migration in Europe
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Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS), Brussels**

BRIEFING NOTE

Background

Labour migration and mobility are, and will continue to be, key dynamics in the Euro-Mediterranean region. European societies cannot think of migration only in terms of the current crisis – it is instead a crucial component to the social, economic and political development of both sides of the Mediterranean. Migration and mobility will powerfully affect relations between the European Union, its member states and countries in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region.

Western European countries face important economic and social challenges due to ageing populations. Indeed, the old-age dependency ratio in EU-28 countries is projected to increase from 3.5 workers per retiree¹ in 2015 to 1.9 workers per retiree in 2080 (Eurostat 2017). This is likely to put significant strains on welfare state provision and increase the labour market demand for young workers. Conversely, countries in the MENA region have very young populations and growing working age populations. Job creation, however, remains often insufficient and youth unemployment rates are very high throughout the region (51.2% in Libya, 40.7% in Palestine, 34.7% in Tunisia, 32.1% in Jordan, and 26.5% in Egypt; Eurostat 2015 data). In Egypt approximately 550,000 enter the working age population every year while job creation lags far behind (data for 2010-2013, Bruni 2017²).

Demographically, EU countries are likely to benefit from migration from the MENA region, but integrating migrants in the labour market comes with challenges such as language barriers, the recognition of educational qualifications, and possible mismatches in skills that would need to be overcome through adequate long-term policies on both sides of the Mediterranean.

¹ “Workers” here refers to working age population (15-64) while “retiree” refers to people over 65.

² Bruni, M. (2017), *Promoting a Common Understanding of Migration Trends*, IOM: Cairo.



Politically, European countries have often struggled to promote coherent policies to address their labour market needs. They also face political opposition to migration, difficulties coordinating migration policies at the EU level, and perceived security threats. Negative attitudes to migration and the rise of anti-immigration parties throughout Europe are often cited as reasons for politicians' reticence to embrace more liberal migration policies. Yet, research on Europeans' attitudes to migration portrays a more ambiguous picture. While migration is an increasingly politicized issue, Europeans' attitudes towards migration have remained fairly stable over time.³

The topic of labour migration in the Euro-Mediterranean region and its implications for the wider EU is therefore multifaceted and requires a blended assessment accounting for demographic, economic, political, and social perspectives while also considering the interplay of legal migration pathways and irregular migratory pressure on the EU (MEDAM, 2017⁴). To grasp this phenomenon fully, it is necessary to think about it from different viewpoints to explore the opportunities and challenges that it presents.

Thinking Beyond the Crisis: Labour Migration and Mobility in the Euro-Mediterranean Region

This event, co-organised by the Migration Policy Centre (MPC) at the European University Institute (EUI) and the Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS) and commissioned by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), provides a timely opportunity to discuss and debate from a variety of perspectives and viewpoints the future of labour migration and mobility in the Euro-Mediterranean region. It brings together speakers and participants from different realms, including national governments, parliamentary institutions, international organisations, research institutes and the private sector.

To guarantee time for debate, each speaker will present for a maximum of ten minutes. Some questions that informed the design of the meeting and upon which both speakers and participants are invited to reflect are:

- What are the key challenges in developing labour migration policies that meet the needs of EU and non-EU countries, their societies and their labour markets?
- How are social, economic, demographic and political changes in south Mediterranean countries likely to influence migration flows in the future?
- While evidence points to the positive contribution that migrants can make to the economies and societies of the countries to which they move, there are also people who are more skeptical or opposed to migration. How can arguments be developed that create support for a more positive approach to labour migration?

³ Heath, A. and L. Richards (2016), "Attitudes towards Immigration and their Antecedents", *ESS Topline Results Series*, Issue 7.

⁴ MEDAM, 2017. *MEDAM Assessment report on Asylum and Migration Policies in Europe*, 2017. Kiel: IfW. Available here: www.ceps.eu/publications/sharing-responsibility-refugees-and-expanding-legal-migration

- To what extent and with what effects has labour migration become part of the relations between the EU and south Mediterranean countries. Can the EU play a role alongside Member States in promoting and developing new legal pathways for labour migrants?

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