The Journey Ahead

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EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA STUDIES

The Journey Ahead

Supporting Successful Migration in Europe and Central Asia

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Foreword

Migration has long been a feature of Europe and Central Asia (ECA). Now home to over 100 million immigrants, the region accounts for one-third of the world's migrant population. Intentions to emigrate are also high, with one in five adults in ECA currently wanting to leave their home permanently.

Driven by income gaps, demographic shifts, climate change, and conflict, migration is set to increase globally, including across ECA countries. As it does, long-term, coordinated, and evidence-based policies will be required to promote safe and orderly cross-border movements that help maximize the shared gains of migration for everyone—from building trade and investment links to boosting productivity, building and transferring skills, and reducing poverty.[1]

If managed well, migration can be a powerful force in addressing growing demographic and socioeconomic imbalances in the ECA region. Economic migrants—both low and high skilled—and refugees can help alleviate labor shortages in Western Europe, for example, where the working-age population is projected to decline by 14 percent between 2020 and 2050. Moreover, in countries of origin with bulging youth populations, migration offers employment opportunities that can ease the strain of limited domestic job creation.

For migrants, the wage gap between advanced and developing economies can be life changing. Despite the hardships of leaving family, familiarity, and social networks behind, migrants can make at least twice the salary they earned in their home country by moving abroad—income gains unmatched by any policy intervention.

Yet migration's full economic potential remains untapped. This World Bank Group report, *The Journey Ahead: Supporting Successful Migration in Europe and Central Asia*, identifies multiple challenges keeping migration from achieving its full potential and offers ways to address them.

[1] World Bank. 2023. *World Development Report 2023: Migrants, Refugees, and Societies*. Washington, DC: World Bank. doi:10.1596/978-1-4648-1941-4.

In destination countries, for example, including in Western Europe, integrating economic migrants and refugee populations remains a challenge, evidenced by persistent employment gaps between native-born and migrant populations. Immigration also has uneven distributional impacts among the native-born population, benefiting some groups while negatively impacting others. Early skill and language training for refugees and economic migrants can support their long-term integration, while active labor market policies and social protection programs may help prevent or mitigate adverse impacts on native-born workers.

Meanwhile, some origin countries—including in the Western Balkans and Eastern Europe—risk labor and skill shortages associated with the departure of part of their workforce. "Brain drain" challenges can be turned into "brain gain" opportunities by leveraging skill circulation and accumulation. One way to do that is through skills monitoring systems to anticipate labor shortages and respond to increased worker demands, together with education cost-sharing mechanisms between destination and origin countries, such as Global Skills Partnerships.

Finally, migrants themselves can face several barriers, inefficiencies, and vulnerabilities throughout their migration journey. Before departing, migrants often lack accurate information about employment abroad, are typically ill-prepared for work in receiving countries, and frequently experience occupational downgrade at destination. In addition, they are highly exposed to negative economic shocks while abroad and often lack protection to cope with those shocks. Strengthening formal migration systems in origin countries, establishing social protection systems for migrants, and implementing mechanisms for the recognition of foreign educational credentials all can support a more productive and resilient migration experience.

By identifying challenges and opportunities associated with migration in ECA, this work aims to inform a more tailored, evidence-based debate on the costs and benefits of cross-border mobility throughout the region. Crucially, the authors argue that the effects of migration are largely shaped by policies in place in both origin and destination countries. As such, policy reforms can greatly enhance the benefits of migration and help effectively manage the economic, social, and political costs. Coordination between countries will be key.

Drawing knowledge from the World Bank Group's extensive data- and policy-oriented activities around the world, this report offers a range of policy options to unlock the economic potential of migration for the benefit of all actors, including migrants, origin, and destination countries.

The report's recommendations have been tailored both to the type of migration considered—forced displacement, high-skilled and low-skilled economic migration—and the perspective of either sending or receiving countries. It is offered as a comprehensive resource for governments, development partners, and other stakeholders throughout Europe and Central Asia, where the richness and diversity of migration experiences offer valuable insights for policy makers in other regions in the world.

Antonella Bassani
Regional Vice President
Europe and Central Asia Region
World Bank

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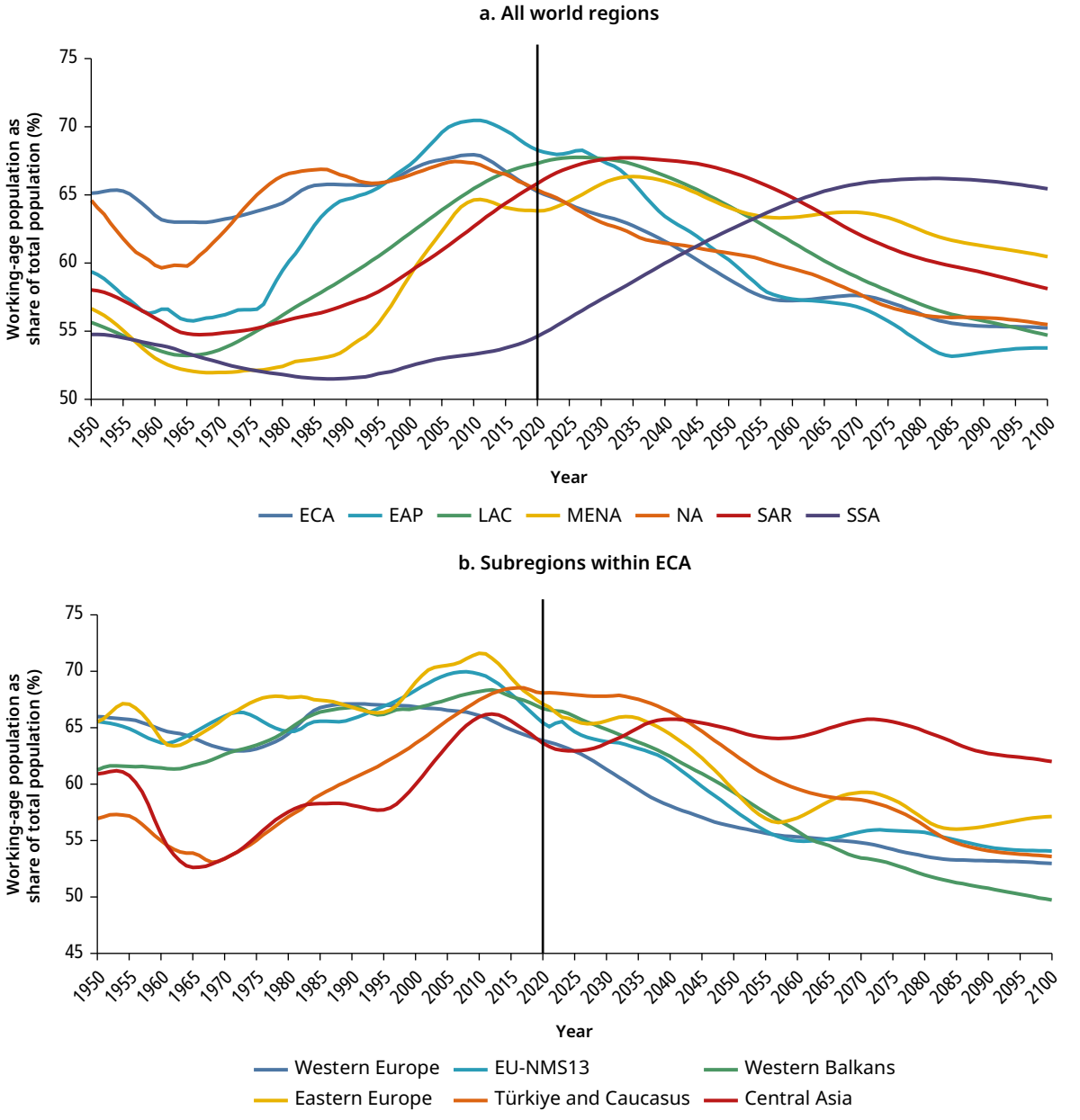
Key Findings and Main Messages

Migration is a powerful force to address socioeconomic and demographic imbalances in Europe and Central Asia (ECA). The region hosts more than 100 million migrants, one-third of the world's migrant population. Projections suggest that the population of ECA will age significantly, while some other world regions will struggle to provide jobs for a growing young population, increasing the need for international mobility (refer to figure MM.1). Economic migrants and refugees can help fill labor shortages, especially in places with a rapidly aging population (in Western Europe, the working-age population is aging and expected to drop 14 percent between 2020 and 2050). In countries of origin with a growing working-age population, migration can provide employment and earnings opportunities to supplement limited creation of domestic employment.

Migration is often the surest path to higher income and better quality of life. The earnings and welfare gains that migrants experience are unmatched by any other policy intervention. By moving abroad, many can earn at least twice the salary they earned in their country of origin. The annual gains from a best-practice poverty program are only about 2.5 percent of the wage gains that low-skilled workers see when they move from a low- or middle-income country to one of the most advanced economies. And remittances extend the gains to their home countries. This means migration is a key contributor to poverty reduction for households in low- and middle-income countries in the ECA region.

But migration has yet to realize its full economic potential. In ECA, inefficiencies and vulnerabilities prevent migrants and countries from benefiting fully. For example, low-skilled migrants are often ill prepared for work abroad and may lack skills needed in destination countries. There is also scope to distribute the costs and benefits of migration more equally. For example, home countries often bear the cost of educating their high-skilled migrants without reaping the benefits of their mobility. In destination countries, a large inflow of foreign workers may be challenging to integrate into the local society.

FIGURE MM.1
Demographic trends

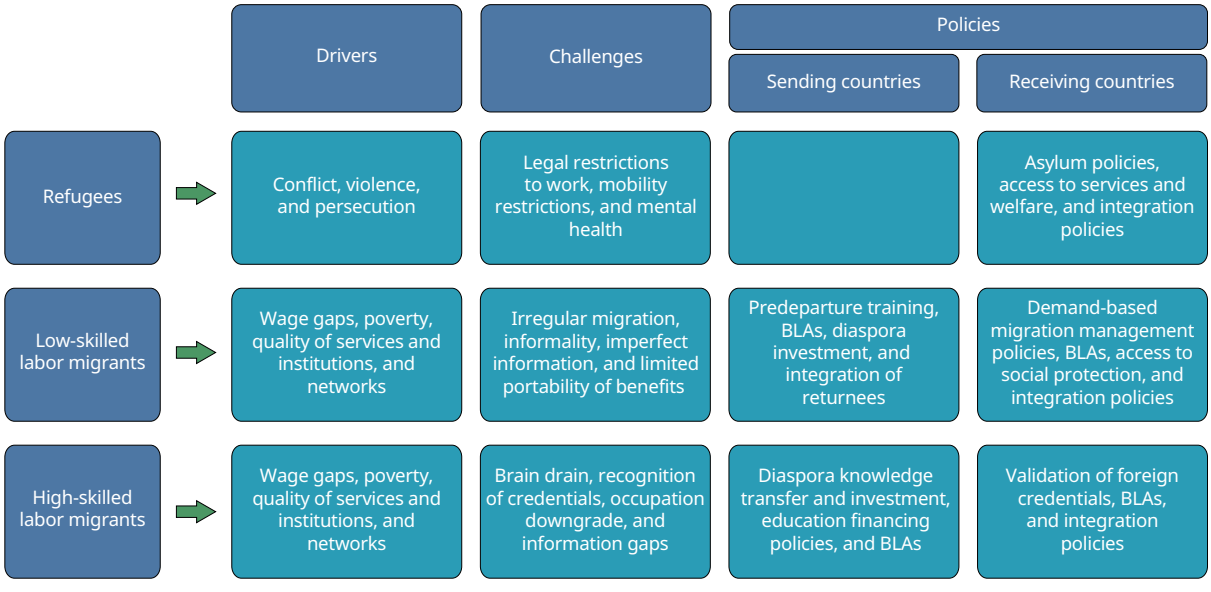


Source: UN World Population Prospects 2022.
Note: Data to the right of the vertical line are projected. EAP = East Asia and Pacific; ECA = Europe and Central Asia; LAC = Latin America and the Caribbean; MENA = Middle East and North Africa; NA = North America; SAR = South Asia; SSA = Sub-Saharan Africa; Western Europe = European Union members before 2004 + European Free Trade Association (Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom); EU-NMS13 = new member states joining the European Union in 2004, 2007, and 2013 (Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovak Republic, and Slovenia); Western Balkans = Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia; Eastern Europe = Belarus, Moldova, the Russian Federation, and Ukraine; Türkiye and Caucasus = Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Türkiye; Central Asia = Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.

Policies to better leverage migration should address varied challenges and experiences in ECA. Experiences here vary widely in terms of migrants' skills and reasons for migrating. To help frame solutions, the report distinguishes between types of migrants (high skilled or low skilled) and two main drivers of migration—to seek economic opportunity (economic migration) or to flee wars, conflicts, or persecution (forced migration; refer to figure MM.2). Policy responses needed to be tailored to these different types of migration. Some measures can be taken unilaterally; others require bilateral or regional coordination.

Early interventions in host countries can support integration and turn refugees into assets. A key lesson from recent experiences is that policies to unlock refugees' productive potential and self-reliance should be implemented very early. They should include developing and strengthening frameworks that support refugees; undertaking early skills and needs assessments; establishing rights and access to formal work; ensuring access to social protections, health care, and education; and applying language training and active labor market policies. Dispersal policies, which help connect refugees to local labor demand, lead to better outcomes. And making assistance available to local people in need can help mitigate the adverse impacts of refugee inflows while also improving social cohesion.

FIGURE MM.2
Typologies of migrants, drivers, challenges, and migration-regulating policies



Source: Original figure for this publication.
Note: Bilateral labor agreements (BLAs) are international agreements signed between two countries to regulate the flow of migrant workers between them.

Destination countries can benefit from immigration and integration while managing costs. Immigration has brought economic gains in destination countries, but it comes with costs, both actual and perceived. There is scope for countries to increase the benefits of immigration, reduce its costs, and ensure that native-born residents share in the gains. Countries can implement needs-based immigration policies, invest in migrants' integration—for example, through access to training—and provide support to affected native-born individuals through social protection or access to active labor market programs. By improving how both migrant and native-born workers experience migration, such interventions may also help reduce negative perceptions about immigration.

In countries of origin, brain drain can become "brain gain." In some places, such as the Western Balkans, over a third of the high-skilled population works abroad, generating concerns about brain drain and potential labor shortages, especially with an aging population. But countries can implement policies to mitigate these risks. These include skills monitoring to anticipate labor shortages and flexible educational systems that can respond rapidly to increased demand for skilled workers, with cost-sharing mechanisms between destination and origin countries, such as Global Skill Partnerships. Diaspora programs can increase knowledge transfers and financial flows back home. Governments can incentivize the return of their high-skilled migrants through reforms to the labor market and business environment, fewer bureaucratic hurdles to returning, and monetary incentives to returnees.

Home countries can support more productive and resilient low-skilled migration, in coordination with destination countries. Countries of origin can develop and strengthen frameworks for safer, more productive formal migration. These include domestic registration systems for migrants as well as bilateral arrangements with destination countries. Mechanisms can ensure that prospective migrants receive accurate information about work opportunities and have access to orientation programs, skills training, and financial literacy courses. Countries can develop social protection programs for migrants and ensure the portability of social insurance and benefits while abroad, in coordination with destination countries. Social assistance and employment support programs to returnees can reduce their vulnerability and facilitate productive reintegration into home labor markets.

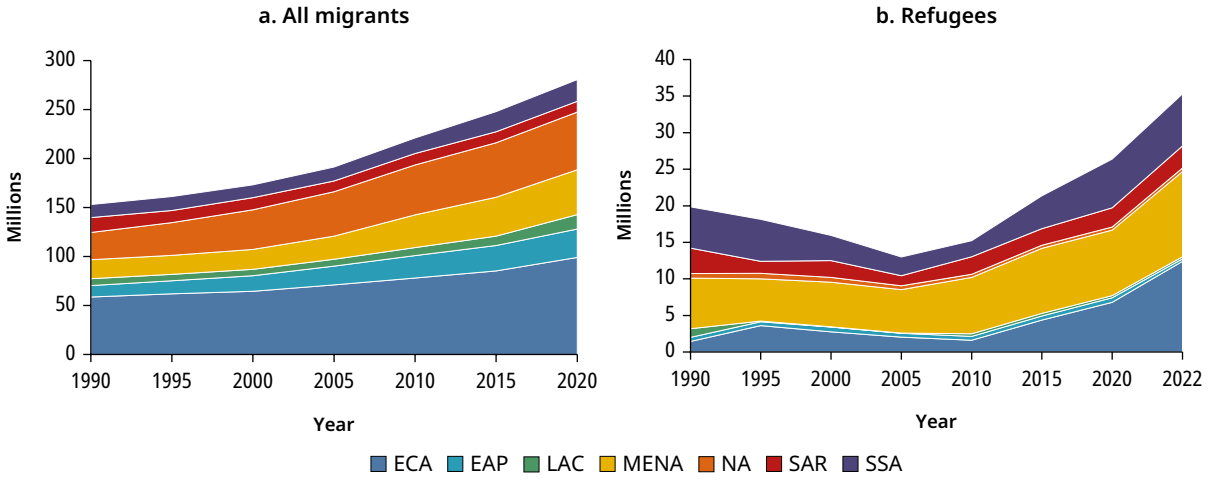
Overview

More people migrate to countries in Europe and Central Asia (ECA) than to any other region in the world. ECA hosts more than 100 million migrants, a third of the world's migrant population.[1] The patterns and experiences that characterize this migration are diverse in terms of reasons for migrating, migrants' skills, and the lengths of stay abroad. Migrants come both from within the region and from outside it. Their immigration is highly concentrated in Western European countries and the Russian Federation: half of all migrants in the region live in just five countries (France, Germany, Italy, Russia, and the United Kingdom). Some ECA countries, such as those in the Western Balkans, have high emigration rates; others, such as Poland, both send and receive many migrants. Economic migration is predominantly high skilled in some corridors, such as the European Union, but predominantly low skilled in others, including Central Asia. Some migrants move abroad permanently, others temporarily. Although migration largely driven by economic factors, the region is also the destination of more than a third of the world's refugees (refer to figure O.1).

Migration is a natural response to wide disparities in countries' income levels, living standards, and population trends across the region—disparities that are persistent and rising. Large differences in wages that workers earn in similar occupations across the region provide a strong incentive to migrate. Living standards and access to public services also vary widely. Some countries have an aging and shrinking labor force, whereas others face a bulge in the young adult population that they are struggling to absorb into the labor market (refer to figure O.2). At the global level, projections suggest that the ECA region's population will age significantly, while Sub-Saharan Africa will struggle to provide jobs for a growing, young population. These trends further increase the need for international mobility.

Cross-border labor mobility is an engine of economic prosperity in ECA. Migration is a powerful force in addressing the region's socioeconomic and demographic imbalances. It generates substantial benefits for migrants, countries of origin, and destination countries. By moving abroad, many

FIGURE O.1
Trends in the number of international migrants, by destination region



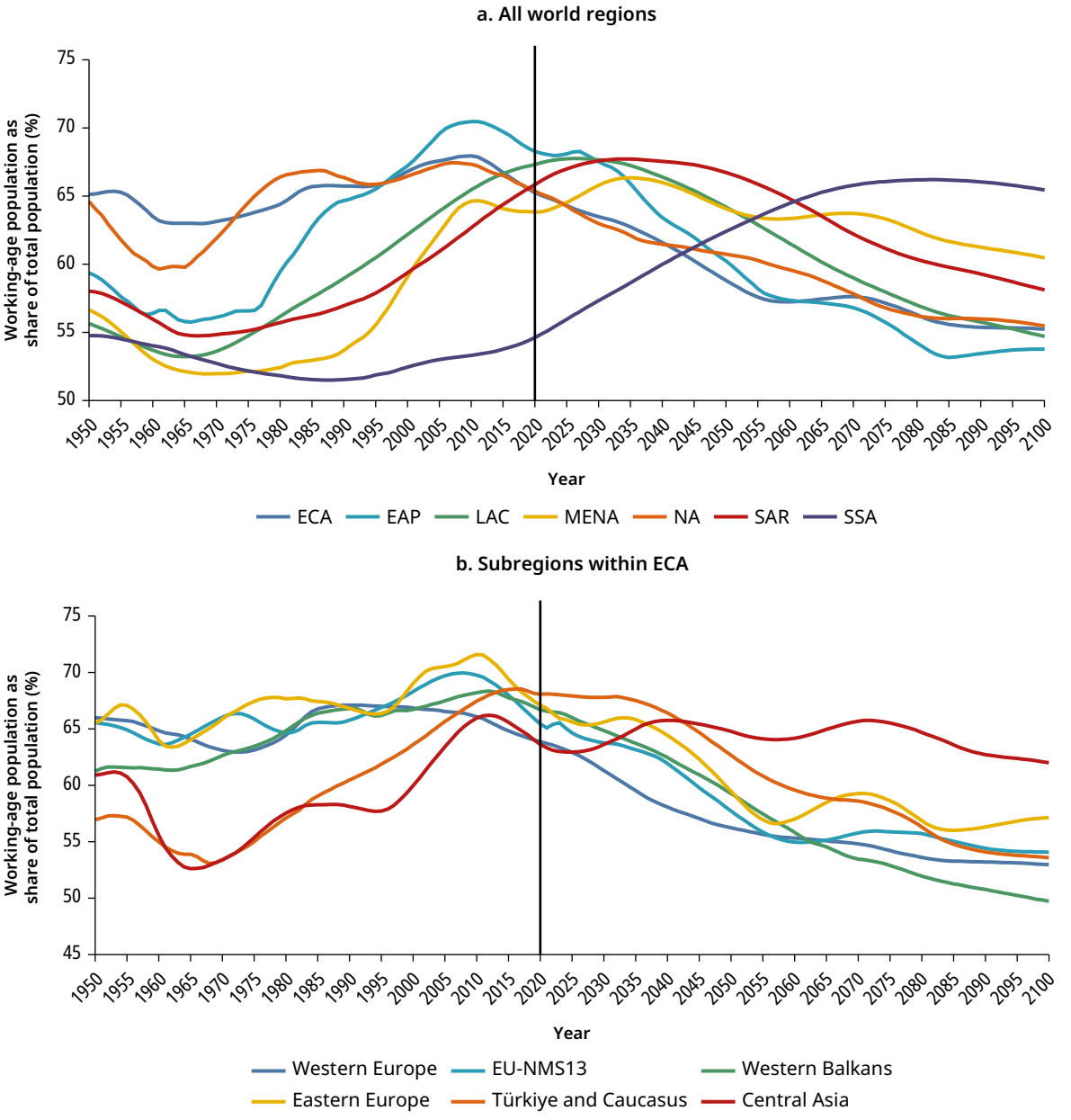
Sources: UN DESA (https://www.un.org/development/desa/pd/data-landing-page) and World Development Indicators, World Bank (https://databank.worldbank.org/source/world-development-indicators).
Note: International migrants include both economic migrants and refugees. EAP = East Asia and Pacific; ECA = Europe and Central Asia; LAC = Latin America and the Caribbean; MENA = Middle East and North Africa; NA = North America; SAR = South Asia; SSA = Sub-Saharan Africa.

migrants can earn at least twice the salary they earned in their country of origin. These earnings gains are unmatched by any other policy intervention: the annual gains from a best-practice poverty program are only about 2.5 percent of the wage gains that low-skill workers see when they move from a low- or middle-income country to one of the most advanced economies (Pritchett 2018). In countries of origin, emigration generates large income flows through remittances, investments, and transfers of know-how. In the Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan, for example, remittances represent more than a third of the gross domestic product (GDP).

Migration also fosters broader human development gains. Emigration can enhance human capital in home countries over the longer term, providing greater incentives to invest in education and opportunities to capitalize on migrants' skills and experiences when they return. Emigration helps home countries with a demographic youth bulge absorb a growing labor force that local markets cannot accommodate. In destination countries, migration can produce net welfare gains by helping fill labor shortages, especially in places with a rapidly aging population (for example, Western Europe, where the working-age population is expected to fall by 14 percent between 2020 and 2050).

Migration in ECA, however, has yet to realize its full potential. Inefficiencies and risks prevent migrants and countries in the region from fully benefiting from cross-border mobility. For example, low-skilled

FIGURE O.2
Demographic trends



Source: UN World Population Prospects 2022.
Note: Data to the right of the vertical line are projected. EAP = East Asia and Pacific; ECA = Europe and Central Asia; LAC = Latin America and the Caribbean; MENA = Middle East and North Africa; NA = North America; SAR = South Asia; SSA = Sub-Saharan Africa; Western Europe = EU-15 + EFTA; EU NMS13 = new member states joining the European Union in 2004, 2007, and 2013.

migrants are sometimes ill-prepared for work abroad, which increases vulnerabilities and reduces the benefits of migration for workers and for origin and destination countries. There is also scope to distribute the costs and benefits of migration more equally. For example, home countries often bear the cost of educating their high-skilled migrants while not always being able to reap the benefits of their mobility. In destination countries, various skill groups of native-born workers are affected by immigration, though not all in the same way. A large inflow of foreign workers also poses challenges for their integration into host country society.

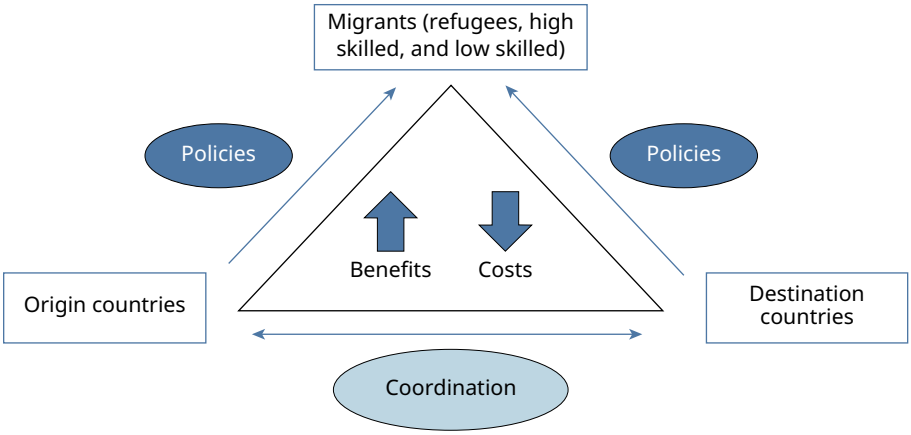
The policy focus should be on implementing the right policies to best benefit from migration. The experience in ECA shows that the costs and benefits of migration are shaped by policies both in origin and destination countries. Building on established as well as new evidence, this report provides a comprehensive set of policy recommendations to address the migration challenges in ECA. It formulates these recommendations to help enhance the net gains for the three main groups of actors: migrants themselves, countries of origin, and destination countries (refer to figure O.3). Some of these measures can be taken unilaterally by countries, such as developing registration systems for labor migrants. Others, for example Global Skill Partnerships (GSPs), require close collaboration between origin and destination countries, or even at the regional level. Some of the policies can be implemented rapidly in the short term. Others, such as building institutional frameworks for safer and more productive migration, require deeper reforms but can yield large returns over the long term.

The great variety of migration experiences within ECA offers policy lessons and insights for other regions. The ECA region's richness and diversity of migration provides an ideal ground to study multiple facets of the phenomenon, considering a range of perspectives, complex impacts, and policy ramifications. Although this report focuses on one region, the variety of migration experiences in ECA makes its policy recommendations relevant on a global scale—in the spirit of the *World Development Report 2023: Migrants, Refugees, and Societies* (World Bank 2023).

The report is organized according to typologies that reflect the range of migration experiences in the region. This approach is intended to improve understanding of the drivers, opportunities, and challenges of each type of migration and to help frame policy solutions and options. The report distinguishes between two main types of migrants (high skilled and low skilled) and between two main drivers of migration—either the search for economic opportunity (economic migration) or the need to flee war, conflict, or persecution (forced migration). Migrants, countries of origin, and destination countries face distinct challenges based on the nature of migration, and different contexts require distinct policy responses

(refer to figure O.4). These typologies help target and coordinate policies to address challenges and enhance the benefits of migration for migrants, origin countries, and destination countries.

FIGURE O.3
Enhancing migration outcomes for all parties through policy



Source: Original figure for this publication.

FIGURE O.4
Broad typologies of migrants, drivers, challenges, and migration-regulating policies

	Drivers	Challenges	Policies	
			Sending countries	Receiving countries
Refugees	Conflict, violence, and persecution	Legal restrictions to work, mobility restrictions, and mental health		Asylum policies, access to services and welfare, and integration policies
Low-skilled labor migrants	Wage gaps, poverty, quality of services and institutions, and networks	Irregular migration, informality, imperfect information, and limited portability of benefits	Predeparture training, BLAs, diaspora investment, and integration of returnees	Demand-based migration management policies, BLAs, access to social protection, and integration policies
High-skilled labor migrants	Wage gaps, poverty, quality of services and institutions, and networks	Brain drain, recognition of credentials, occupation downgrade, and information gaps	Diaspora knowledge transfer and investment, education financing policies, and BLAs	Validation of foreign credentials, BLAs, and integration policies

Source: Original figure for this publication.
Note: Bilateral labor agreements (BLAs) are international agreements signed between two countries to regulate the flow of migrant workers between them.

Key Takeaways

Socioeconomic and Labor Impacts of Migration in Destination Countries

Since the mid-1990s, immigration has contributed significantly to population expansion and demographic change in the 15 countries that were EU member states before 2004 (the EU-15). Net migration inflows account for nearly 80 percent of population growth in these countries, providing a vital lift to stagnant or declining growth rates among native-born populations. In addition, because immigrants are typically younger than the native-born population, immigration also has significant effects on a country's demographic structure.

In Western European countries, migrants support employment in all sectors, particularly the key sectors of manufacturing, health care, and social care. In several European economies, shortages of workers in specific sectors and occupations present a threat to competitiveness and are increasing the demand for foreign workers. Foreign workers are employed to a greater degree in low-skilled occupations and in services catering to the needs of an aging population. Non-EU immigrants in the European Union, however, are less likely than EU-born persons to be employed, largely because of the additional barriers they face.

Migration is associated with net economic gains in receiving regions. Most empirical studies on immigration and economic growth in Europe's receiving countries reveal a positive connection. The empirical findings of studies of specific EU countries are in line with the international evidence, suggesting that immigration boosts growth. High-skilled immigration can particularly affect growth through labor input, human capital accumulation, and productivity. Human capital gains are typically larger in immigrant-receiving countries and regions: the larger and more diverse human capital contributed by immigration increases worker productivity. The diversification of skills and the concentration of migrants in tasks for which they are better suited increases economic productivity and stimulates innovation. This privileges native-born workers who specialize in occupations where they have a comparative advantage, such as those requiring extensive communication.

The overall impact of immigration on native-born individuals' employment outcomes has been small but asymmetric across groups, and net fiscal impacts tend to be positive. The prevailing view in receiving-country governments, and, to some degree, among the public, is that immigration lowers earnings and reduces job opportunities for

native-born workers. However, evidence from ECA shows otherwise. The arrival of migrants may have short-term, negative effects on the wages of native-born workers with comparable skills (especially low-skilled workers), although these impacts are usually small. By contrast, the presence of migrants tends to have positive effects on the wages of native-born workers who have complementary skills. Over the long term, immigration has been shown to raise productivity, promote occupational advancement, and increase native-born workers' wages. In most Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries, the fiscal impact of immigration has been neutral or marginally positive, indicating that immigrants tend to be net contributors to taxes and social insurance. However, these fiscal effects tend to be greater for migrants who are high skilled or from the European Economic Area, versus those who are low skilled or from low- or middle-income countries.

Immigrants' labor market outcomes lag behind those of native-born workers, although the gaps diminish with time spent in the destination country. The gap in employment rates between native-born and immigrant workers in EU countries was around 4.5 percentage points in 2020. Immigrants are also considerably more likely to be employed in low-pay and low-status occupations. Accounting for differences in the profiles of migrants and native-born individuals does not reduce the gap, which indicates that immigrants face specific hurdles in labor market integration. However, employment gaps decrease over time. This indicates that some of the barriers that migrants face are eased the longer they stay in the host country. Two key barriers associated with immigrants' poorer labor market outcomes are a lack, or limited command, of the host country language as well as occupational downgrade.

Many migrants are employed in occupations that require a lower level of skills than their formal level of educational attainment would predict. This occupational downgrade limits the economic gains from migration. The phenomenon is most pronounced among non-EU migrants. Migrants from the newer EU member states (the EU-NMS13) have, on average, 1.3 more years of schooling than native-born people in the same occupation. Occupational downgrade among high-skilled women migrants to the European Union is striking, because the top two occupations of tertiary-educated women migrants from the EU-NMS13 are cleaners and personal care workers. The occupational downgrade of high-skilled migrants in ECA is linked to a lack of location-specific skills, including language; to training in occupations that do not match the demand in destination countries; and to imperfect recognition of qualifications obtained in the country of origin.

Policy Recommendations

In destination countries, enhancing the gains from migration starts by identifying needed skills that migrants can bring or acquire. The benefits of immigration for ECA countries tend to be the greatest if immigrants are high skilled, concentrated in occupations that are in demand, and complement the skills of the native-born population. Hence it is important to have policies in place that ensure immigration flows fulfill these criteria. This starts by establishing and strengthening skills monitoring systems and labor market observatories to identify skills needed that the native-born population cannot fill. Such systems could also be developed on a regional scale by building an EU-wide labor demand system. In addition, destination countries can develop consultative processes with employers, labor unions, and other stakeholders. In the United Kingdom, for example, the Migration Advisory Committee reviews labor needs with stakeholders in selected sectors and advises the government on how immigration could help respond to those needs.

Once needed skills are identified, managed migration policies and training programs can help guarantee that migrants address those needs. The first option is for destination countries to develop bilateral labor agreements (BLAs) that target occupations where they face shortages or rising demand. Such an approach can be implemented in the context of GSP programs, in which destination and origin countries agree on the quantity and skills profile of migrant labor required and then provide technical and financial resources to train migrants in their countries of origin. Another policy option is to select prospective migrants based on their potential for integration with market needs. In this spirit, Austria, Germany, Portugal, and Sweden have established job-search visas that allow entry for the purpose of finding employment to foreign workers who meet specific criteria. Another approach, followed by Spain, is for countries to streamline migration procedures for occupations or migrant profiles that are needed. Other countries, such as in Sweden and the United Kingdom, are trying to make immigration systems more selective to reduce migration flows that are less suited to their labor markets.

Ensuring that migrants work at their level of qualification, through mechanisms to recognize foreign credentials, is also key to enhancing gains for migrants and destination countries. Although migrants within EU countries are de jure granted the same rights to access jobs as native-born individuals, de facto limitations remain in recognizing qualifications and skills, especially for migrants from outside the European Union. To tackle this issue, destination countries must build or strengthen mechanisms to determine whether origin countries' standards for each skill are equivalent to their own (Nielson 2004). Regional cooperation to

validate foreign educational credentials, as well as the development of regional qualification frameworks, such as the European Qualifications Framework for EU countries, are promising efforts in this direction. In June 2023, member states of the Eurasian Economic Union (EaEU) passed an agreement on mutual recognition of academic degrees, though it needs to be implemented and enforced.

Labor market and social protection policies can prevent or mitigate adverse effects of immigration for some native-born groups, such as low-skilled workers. A broader effort to support labor market flexibility in destination countries can allow native-born workers who have complementary skills and capital to move to the areas and sectors where migrants enter, while also helping workers with similar skills move to other regions, sectors, or occupations (World Bank 2023). This can support faster labor market adjustments and reduce adverse effects on wages or employment for some native-born, low-skilled workers. But even with the right labor market and migration policies in place *ex ante,* immigration may produce adverse impacts on some groups, at least in the short term. To mitigate such impacts, targeted social protection and active labor market policies (ALMPs) can be implemented. Effective public employment services can help individuals who lose their jobs and assist with mobility costs as they seek work in other regions or sectors. Retraining and upskilling programs can also help native-born workers with skills similar to those of migrants to move toward higher-paying jobs where they have a comparative advantage. And social protection systems and programs can support those who are temporarily affected by job losses, especially in destination countries, where immigration generates additional fiscal resources to finance such programs.

Integration policies and interventions that raise awareness of migrants' contributions can help reduce negative perceptions and improve how both immigrants and native-born workers experience migration. Recent evidence shows that inclusive integration policies have a positive impact on integration outcomes for migrants (Bilgili, Huddleston, and Joki 2015; Huddleston 2020; Kende et al. 2022; Pecoraro et al. 2022), including better employment and less reliance on social assistance. This, in turn, helps improve perceptions among the native-born population. Addressing misinformation and ensuring that people are aware of the role migrants play in receiving societies is also crucial to mitigate the risk of anti-immigration sentiments. But whereas providing counter-information only on the magnitude of migration has a limited impact on attitudes (Hopkins, Sides, and Citrin 2019), information on the characteristics of migrants and their impacts on the labor market or welfare system can significantly improve popular support for immigration (Grigorieff, Roth, and Ubfal 2020; Haaland and Roth 2020; Jørgensen and Osmundsen 2022).

Socioeconomic Integration of Refugee Populations

In the Nordic countries, compulsory language training, active labor market policies, and assignment of refugees to areas with high labor demand have helped improve refugees' employment outcomes. Language training is a vital part of the "activation package" offered to refugees in these countries, and it has produced substantial long-term effects. Language training tends to be compulsory, with participation and completion often being conditions to retain social benefits as well as access to on-the-job training or subsidized employment. Evidence shows that compulsory language training has been the most effective program to support refugees' employment outcomes. Other successful programs include (in order) assignment to areas with high labor demand and participation in programs that were part of the ALMP package.

Türkiye's experience of hosting Syrian refugees shows that better long-term outcomes can be achieved by rapidly shifting policies from an exclusive focus on emergency response to early support for longer-term integration. After providing vital income to the most vulnerable— the Syrians under temporary protection (SuTPs), through the Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN) in 2016, Türkiye developed a framework for the inclusion of SuTPs into mainstream basic services. The government issued residency cards that allowed access to education, health care, and other public services. Housing policies also changed from an initial approach that focused on accommodating refugees in temporary shelters to providing housing support to live in urban centers near more job opportunities. Policies addressing labor market issues were adopted, with the government offering work permits, services (such as counseling), and financial support for entrepreneurship. Surveys in Türkiye show that a relatively high share of SuTPs are employed and that the integration of SuTPs has been positive overall, partly because of these government support interventions, which have supported social cohesion between refugees and host communities. In addition, the impacts of SuTPs on overall employment and wages for Turkish citizens were limited, although some vulnerable native-born groups were negatively affected.

The experiences in Türkiye also show the importance of sharing responsibility among receiving countries in the region. The costs imposed on Türkiye from the sudden inflow of refugees—with ramifications particularly in the capacity of its health care system—ushered in calls for a cost-sharing approach. This led to the EU–Türkiye agreement in 2016, under which the European Union provided €6 billion to support the humanitarian response.

In addition, the Turkish experience illustrates the need to streamline access to formal employment, reduce disincentives to refugee employment, and offer early skills assessments. Although estimates suggest that more than 1.5 million Syrians in Türkiye can work, fewer than 100,000 work permits are issued annually. Permits are difficult to obtain, costly for employers, and valid for only a year. Moreover, upon receiving a formal employment contract through a work permit, Syrian refugees lose their eligibility for social assistance cash transfers through the ESSN program, creating a disincentive to enter formal employment. Establishing more comprehensive assessments of refugees' skills and qualifications at the time of entry could also ensure more effective use of labor market services available to refugees.

Germany's experiences showed the value of expedited asylum procedures, rationalized dispersal policies, and comprehensive integration programs. The sudden increase in asylum seekers in Europe over the 2015–17 period focused on Germany, where half of the 3.1 million asylum applications were filed. In response, Germany suspended the Dublin II Regulation (Tjaden and Heidland, forthcoming), allowing refugees who had passed through other EU countries to apply for asylum. It grouped asylum cases by complexity to speed up processing times and provide integration services before adjudication in cases where asylum seekers were likely to receive protection. Germany also invested heavily in language training for Syrian refugees; provided job counseling and job search assistance; developed a public portal to assess and recognize foreign professional qualifications; and implemented a dispersal policy, assigning refugees to specific regions on the basis of local labor demand. Although the efforts significantly improved the labor market outcomes for refugees (Battisti, Giesing, and Laurentsyeva 2019), the success came at some cost, because nonprioritized asylum seekers faced longer wait times and worse access to public resources.

The more recent inflow of Ukrainian refugees into EU countries has highlighted the importance of a large-scale, rapid, and coordinated response to support refugees' outcomes. Several policies have likely helped secure better labor market outcomes than in past refugee waves. Shortly after the start of the Ukrainian refugee crisis, the European Union approved the Temporary Protection Directive, giving refugees the right to temporary protection for one year (renewable for up to three years), without the need for lengthy asylum procedures. Ukrainian refugees also received residence permits, while requirements for work visas were waived. Measures to ease work permit regulations and enhance labor market access had rapid, positive impacts on the labor market in

host countries. Additional interventions aimed at improving the match between labor market supply and demand included dedicated employment platforms for recruitment of refugees; wage subsidies and other financial incentives for employers; and support, such as start-up loans, for entrepreneurship. The European Union also developed a refugee skills passport specifically for Ukrainians.

Policy Recommendations

Host countries can ensure sufficient humanitarian support and reception capacity through several key measures. First, the timely provision of temporary protection status has been fundamental in ensuring that humanitarian aid reaches asylum seekers quickly. Second, one-stop-shop reception centers have been effective in providing a rapid assessment of refugees' characteristics, needs, and vulnerabilities and directing them to services needed in the short term. Third, to weather the initial shock and cover basic needs, cash transfers have been effective in improving refugees' welfare, with few adverse effects on earnings opportunities, at least in the short term (Bahar, Brough, and Peri 2024). Fourth, physical and mental health support has also been essential. These efforts require significant resources and coordination among receiving countries. Cost-sharing agreements and corresponding financing mechanisms need to be in place, especially when refugee inflows focus on countries with limited reception capacity.

Early policy measures to support refugees' labor market integration can generate high payoffs for host countries. Measures to support integration include early skills and needs assessments, rapid access to labor markets and public services, language training, and ALMPs. Most successful interventions combine rapid and extensive humanitarian assistance upon arrival with policies that promote long-term integration. Experience shows that measures supporting integration should begin very early, in the emergency response phase. Because refugees often arrive without key documents to verify their skills and credentials, refugee skills passports can help validate their skills and enhance their employability. Ensuring that refugees can quickly access technical and language training programs is also key to integration.

Giving refugees rapid access to the labor market is particularly important. It can be facilitated by policy measures, including removing or relaxing restrictions that apply to third-country nationals entering the labor market, expediting or removing work permit procedures, and streamlining asylum processes. In addition, well-targeted active labor market programs have also been shown to support economic integration.

Refugees' geographical locations and mobility are fundamental to integration and can be supported by dispersal policies that address local labor market needs. A key takeaway from both research and experience is that refugees should not be isolated from the native-born population in receiving countries. Rigid housing policies that tie refugees to a physical location far from economic activity—limiting employment opportunities and preventing mobility—should be discouraged, because they are negatively associated with refugees' long-term employment outcomes. Instead, policies should facilitate movement to areas with high demand for labor and high absorptive capacity, which can avoid generating additional imbalances in local labor markets. Such policies should be underpinned by information on local market conditions and demand, as well as on refugees' sociodemographic characteristics, educational attainment, and employment aspirations.

High-Skilled Migration: Lessons for Origin Countries

High-skilled emigration from ECA countries is rising even more rapidly than overall migration. The number of high-skilled migrants in the European Union, the main destination of high-skilled migrants from ECA, more than tripled over 2004–18, from about 4 million to 13 million. In some countries of origin in ECA, particularly smaller ones such as those in the Western Balkans, the incidence of high-skilled emigration is very large compared with the size of the working-age population. For example, an estimated 30 percent of Albania's working-age population with a tertiary degree lives abroad. For Bosnia and Herzegovina, this figure is 45 percent.

This "brain drain" can have a negative effect on home economies in the short term by reducing the supply of skilled workers in essential occupations. Because emigrants from most ECA countries are more skilled than the population that does not emigrate, their departure decreases the stock of human capital available, at least in the short term. Without the right policies in place, this can result in domestic labor shortages, including in critical sectors and occupations, such as health care and information technology, especially in countries with an aging population. The loss of high-skilled workers can negatively affect firm productivity, total factor productivity, entrepreneurship, and innovation, as documented in some Eastern European countries (Giesing and Laurentsyeva 2018) and in Italy (Anelli et al. 2019). Because emigration mostly comes from less developed regions of origin countries, it can also widen the gap between prospering and lagging parts of a country. And beyond economic impacts, the departure of high-skilled workers raises concerns about the sustainability

of pension systems. From a fiscal standpoint, outflows of high-skilled labor also shrink the fiscal base, especially when emigration is concentrated among higher-paid workers.

In the medium to long term, however, countries of origin can experience net gains in human capital ("brain gain"), as observed in some ECA countries. To experience brain gain, these countries must be able to increase their educational institutions' capacity to meet the demand for certain types of labor abroad. And the number of newly educated individuals who do not emigrate, or who ultimately return, must be large enough to add to the collective human capital within the home country. Overall, origin countries in ECA have experienced a net positive association between emigration and human capital accumulation, as long as emigration rates remain moderate (Beine, Docquier, and Oden-Defoort 2011; Beine, Docquier, and Rapoport 2008; Docquier, Lohest, and Marfouk 2007). For example, in some countries, the rapid rise in the number of graduates in medicine more than compensated for the doctors who emigrated. This was the case in the Czechia, Romania, and Slovenia, although not in Estonia, Hungary, and Latvia. The variation in experiences suggest that policies and local contexts are key in determining whether home countries can also increase their own supply of high-skilled workers as a secondary benefit of migration opportunities.

Origin countries can also benefit from their high-skilled diasporas through remittances, greater diffusion of knowledge and technology, and increased financial flows and trade. The most direct and tangible impact of these diasporas on origin countries is through remittances sent home, which boost income and can improve macroeconomic stability. The presence of highly skilled migrants overseas can also help diffuse knowledge and technology back to their home countries, as reported in the context of migration from former Yugoslav countries to Germany (Bahar, Brough, and Peri 2024). Diaspora networks can support trade and finance in their countries of origin by reducing transaction costs and information asymmetries. And beyond economic impacts, diasporas can positively affect institutions and governance in migrant-sending countries, as in Moldova (Barsbai et al. 2017).

The return of high-skilled migrants may also benefit their home countries, although countries in Eastern Europe and the Western Balkans struggle to attract these emigrants back. When migrants do return, countries of origin can benefit from the human and financial capital they have accumulated while abroad. Although nearly half of migrants to the European Union return to their home countries, overall just 12 percent of high-skilled migrants from Eastern European countries do. Likewise, there is little evidence of returns by high-skilled migrants from Albania,

Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo. Likely explanations include the persistence of economic challenges and the push-and-pull factors that lead skilled workers to emigrate. Hence the economies of Eastern Europe and the Western Balkans have been unable to reap many of the benefits associated with the return of high-skilled migrants.

Policy Recommendations

Countries that want to reduce emigration can address root causes, such as domestic labor market performance, governance, and the quality of public sector services. Home countries can increase their relative attractiveness by reducing bottlenecks to employment creation; improving the business environment; and strengthening institutions and public services. Overall, measures that make the domestic labor market more attractive and efficient—with a focus on youth, who have a higher propensity to emigrate—can reduce the strength of push-and-pull factors. Approaches include traditional labor market policies such as support to entrepreneurship, ALMPs (including wage subsidy programs), training, and labor market intermediation services, as well as changes in labor regulations that may discourage employment. Supply-side policies must be accompanied by broader demand-side policies that affect the labor market and employment creation, such as measures to improve the business and macroeconomic environment or the tax and benefits system. Beyond the labor market, the provision of quality public services, primarily through more investment in health and education, may also encourage workers and their families to stay. Such measures may also increase the likelihood of return among high-skilled workers who have already left.

Reforms to tertiary education financing in countries of origin, combined with bilateral agreements with destination countries, may help mitigate the financial losses when graduates of publicly funded universities emigrate. In addition to university funding, financing policies involve measures aimed directly at students and graduates, including student loans, time-based repayment loans, and income-contingent loans (ICLs). For example, ICL contracts could be designed to make loan repayments feasible and tax deductible in destination countries. Such measures, combined with bilateral agreements, could help ensure a more equitable distribution of educational costs between origin and destination countries (Poutvaara 2004).

GSPs can help address financial burdens and losses of human capital in countries of origin and ensure a better match between migrants and jobs in destination countries. Under these bilateral arrangements, the country of origin agrees to train people in skills needed both in home and destination countries. Evidence from ECA countries and beyond

indicates that three core principles are essential for such partnerships to succeed. First, investing in human capital expansion in both origin and destination countries should be the paramount goal. Second, extensive cooperation between origin and destination countries is essential for the long-term investments in training and labor market access that such partnerships aim to promote. Third, well-managed and systematic international systems for social protection and labor market intermediation are needed to facilitate cross-border economic gains. Last, institutional capacity is needed for recruitment, training, and diaspora engagement.

Countries of origin can establish systems to monitor emigration flows and the supply and demand of workers with needed skills, so that they anticipate potential shortages, especially in critical occupations. For the educational system to respond rapidly, it needs timely and precise information on the demand for high-skilled professionals both from within the home country and from destination countries. Such monitoring of demand is available today in only a handful of countries. Data about emigrants' skills and educational profiles should be collected at the time of departure, and monitoring systems should also be put in place for specific skills.

Educational systems in countries of origin should also be flexible enough to address rapid changes in internal and external demand. Rigid training systems for certain occupations—such as highly regulated systems based on narrow entry criteria or a small, fixed number of places in medical education—may not align with the needs created by changes in demand for these occupations. Efforts to address changes in demand for specific skills can be made at both the intensive margin (by enhancing capacity at schools and universities) and the extensive margin (by establishing new education centers).

Countries of origin may encourage high-skilled migrants to return by removing or reducing regulatory, bureaucratic, and informational barriers; providing financial incentives; and ensuring greater portability of social benefits. Regulatory and bureaucratic barriers, such as restrictions and regulations on citizenship and residency rights, make it difficult and costly for migrants to return to their home countries. Informational barriers may also prevent them from returning: policies that make information more accessible about job opportunities and changes in conditions in the home country may help. Financial or fiscal incentives encouraging the permanent return of high-skilled migrants have also been effective in some contexts, provided they are large enough. Such incentives could include tax exemptions and benefits, interest-free or low-interest loans, temporary salary supplements to facilitate career entry, housing assistance, schooling for children, and employment opportunities for

spouses. And greater portability of social benefits, particularly retirement benefits, can alleviate constraints to return migration and incentivize migrants to return home (Avato, Koettl, and Sabates-Wheeler 2010).

Regardless of whether migrants return, countries of origin can leverage high-skilled migration through diaspora programs. Emigrants can help transfer knowledge back to their origin country after their exposure to more productive and innovative environments in destination countries. The first step is to establish, strengthen, or make better use of diaspora platforms through registries, interactive portals, and fellowship programs. This can help build relationships with the diaspora and provide matching and network services that connect migrants in various destination countries with each other and with the private and public sectors in their home economies. For example, collaboration between researchers or institutions abroad and in countries of origin could be facilitated by establishing scientific networks and knowledge funds. Such initiatives have started in the Western Balkans and are in various stages of implementation (OECD 2022).

Low-Skilled Migration: Lessons for Origin Countries

Low-skilled migration generates large benefits for migrants, their families, and origin countries. The most direct impacts are large wage gains for workers and the subsequent increase in household income and welfare through remittances, which generate substantial income flows to home countries. For example, in the Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan, remittances represent up to 30 percent of GDP and more than 50 percent of migrant households' total income. Because low-skilled migration is concentrated among lower-income households, it can have a drastic effect on poverty reduction. In Uzbekistan, for example, it is estimated that the poverty rate would rise from 9.6 percent to 16.8 percent in the absence of remittances. Beyond these direct welfare impacts, low-skilled emigration can affect households and communities left behind by enabling large investments in human capital and entrepreneurial activities. In the home country, migration can affect labor market participation among household members, as well as improve financial literacy and women's empowerment.

However, if not well managed, low-skilled migration can involve inefficiencies and vulnerabilities, which are often borne by migrants and their households. Vulnerabilities manifest throughout the migration life cycle: before departure, while abroad, and after return. The COVID-19 pandemic and, more recently, the economic spillovers from Russia's invasion of Ukraine have exposed the limitations of current migration

systems as well as low-skilled migrants' vulnerability to shocks. Although a few of the challenges migrants faced during these shocks were specific to those events, most vulnerabilities are more general and will persist in the absence of adequate policy measures.

Vulnerabilities and inefficiencies are evident before migrants depart, with many of them insufficiently prepared and reliant on inaccurate information and informal arrangements. Formal information channels for prospective low-skilled migrants in ECA are underdeveloped, likely contributing to insufficient understanding about the processes, costs, and benefits of emigration. Low-skilled migrants often lack prior experience and adequate skills for the jobs most in demand in destination countries. They are seldom prepared for the vulnerabilities they will likely face while abroad. Many of them depart without even securing an employment contract with an employer in the destination country.

Once at their destination, low-skilled migrants are highly exposed to shocks and have limited access to social protection. In many cases, low-skilled migrants concentrate in only one or two destination countries and in very few sectors of activity. As a result, low-skilled migration flows, countries of origin, and migrants are highly exposed to negative shocks, as evidenced by the COVID-19 pandemic. Low-skilled migrants often hold temporary or seasonal employment contracts, or work without contracts. Hence, they are typically the first to be laid off when a shock hits (Fasani and Mazza 2023), and they often lack access to social protections to cope with these shocks. Even within the European Union, where formal migration and employment arrangements are more common, migrants typically have more limited access to social protection programs than native-born individuals.

Vulnerabilities and inefficiencies can continue when low-skilled migrants return home, especially when they do so unexpectedly. Temporary migrants who return for reasons they had not anticipated are especially vulnerable. They have often paid for the journey upfront, sometimes by taking out loans. Unable to stay abroad long enough to earn as much as they expected, they return without set plans and face the risk of unemployment at home. This can have profound impacts on migrants and their families, as evidenced by harmful coping strategies seen in households with return migrants during the COVID-19 pandemic. Even when migrants return as planned, there are policy challenges for their home countries—but also opportunities. A key issue facing policy makers in these countries is finding more effective ways to boost the productive use of the financial and human capital that returning migrants have accumulated while abroad.

Policy Recommendations

Strengthening systems to support formal migration is a key step toward more productive and resilient low-skilled migration. Such efforts must begin before departure, with measures to strengthen the role of public institutions and regulatory frameworks in providing accurate information about the migration experience and work opportunities abroad. Creating and enhancing the use of formal migration routes also requires that countries develop or strengthen registration systems for low-skilled migration. This requires close cooperation with destination countries, which can be formalized through BLAs. In their various forms, these agreements have been effective tools to manage international labor flows and improve the migration experience for all parties involved. Implementing them at scale, however, requires administrative capacity in both origin and destination countries. Proper enforcement involves transparent negotiation processes and strong implementation, monitoring, and evaluation.

Programs to upgrade prospective migrants' skills, when combined with initiatives to diversify migration flows, can enhance the benefits of migration. To reduce exposure to shocks and increase gains from migration, origin countries need to broaden the range of migration destinations and work opportunities. Entering new markets requires building a more qualified workforce with verifiable credentials for jobs that are in demand in new places. Identifying the demand for specific types of workers requires more capacity in line agencies responsible for managing labor migration. Close cooperation with destination countries is also essential; this can be formalized through development of new BLAs. Once the demand from new markets is identified, origin countries need to reorient their skills development efforts, by training migrants for new occupations as well as providing language training. This requires expanding the capacity and resources of public training programs along with potential partnerships with private providers. Such efforts can be supported by destination countries, for example through GSPs, where the destination country provides technical and financial resources for the training of prospective migrants in their home country. Skills development needs to be complemented by certification to signal technical ability, accompanied by due recognition of qualifications in overseas markets.

Several policies can help migrants gain better access to social protection and reduce their vulnerability abroad. Host country governments can better integrate migrants into social safety nets, create social protection programs tailored to the needs of migrants, or use a combination of the two. Sending country governments could coordinate with destination countries to create systems in which migrant workers

make contributions and have access to unemployment benefits and health care at the same levels offered to the destination country's citizens. Such a system, ensuring the portability of social rights, could be devised within existing institutional frameworks such as the EaEU. To mitigate unemployment risks for migrants, origin countries could work with the private sector to develop job-loss insurance. This could cover job losses—particularly those related to exogenous shocks. Social protection interventions (such as welfare funds) can also help migrants cope with shocks in the destination country.

Measures to improve migrants' financial literacy and inclusion and to formalize remittance flows can support more productive use of these funds. Remittances are a major source of income for lower-income migrant households and for home countries. They could contribute to more productive investments—enhancing their development impact. In many countries of origin, especially those at lower income levels, remittances are mainly used for immediate consumption. Formalizing remittance flows would support a more productive use of these funds for investment and self-employment activities. Measures can be taken to improve migrant households' access to, and inclusion in, the formal financial sector. This would expand their use of financial products and reduce transaction costs for sending remittances through formal channels. In addition, financial literacy programs can enhance households' understanding of the options for investments and savings. In contexts outside ECA, such programs have been effective in increasing migrants' financial knowledge, increasing their savings and productive usage of remittances.

After migrants return, key interventions may support more productive reintegration into home labor markets and reduce their vulnerabilities. The first step is establishing or strengthening registration systems for return migrants, which should be linked to national registries and a pool of support services. To gather information for such registries, systematic rapid needs assessments for returning migrants can be carried out at one-stop shops at main points of entry into the country. Referrals can then direct migrants to social protections and labor programs that address their needs. In parallel, support programs tailored to returnees' needs should be carefully designed, piloted, and evaluated before being scaled up—to help ensure their effectiveness. For returnees who intend to stay in the origin country, productive reintegration into home labor markets could be facilitated through better linkages with ALMPs and greater cooperation with receiving countries. Return migrants who have savings and entrepreneurial aspirations may benefit from one-stop-shop services that provide in-kind assistance, help with financial literacy, support to develop a business plan, and access to banking and microcredit. In situations where

migrants return involuntarily or earlier than expected, short-term support can help alleviate temporary hardship.

Note

1. The definition of Europe and Central Asia used throughout this report also includes countries of the European Union. Refer to the "Classifications" section at the start of this volume.

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Abbreviations

ALMPs	active labor market policies
BLA	bilateral labor agreement
CEAS	Common European Asylum System
CPIs	consumer price indices
DGMM	Directorate General for Migration Management
EaEU	Eurasian Economic Union
EAP	East Asia and Pacific
ECA	Europe and Central Asia
EFTA	European Free Trade Association
EQPR	European Qualifications Passport for Refugees
ESSN	Emergency Social Safety Net
EU	European Union (used as modifier; spelled out as noun, sim. to US and UK)
EU-15	European Union members before May 1, 2004
EU LFS	European Union Labour Force Survey
EU-NMS13	new member states joining the European Union on May 1, 2004; January 1, 2007; and July 1, 2013
FDI	foreign direct investment
G2G	government-to-government
GDP	gross domestic product
GSP	Global Skill Partnership
ICL	income-contingent loan
ICT	information and communications technology
ISEI	International Socio-Economic Index of Occupational Status
ISKUR	Turkish Employment Office
IT	information technology
IV	instrumental variable
KOSGEB	Small and Medium Enterprises Development Organization
LAC	Latin American and the Caribbean

MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MiRPAL	Migration and Remittance Peer-Assisted Learning Network
NA	North America
NEET	neither employment nor education or training
NGOs	nongovernmental organizations
NUTS	Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics
NUTS-2	NUTS level 2
NUTS-3	NUTS level 3
PES	public employment services
PMM	Presidency of Migration Management
PPP	purchasing power parity
SAR	South Asia
SSA	Sub-Saharan Africa
SuTPs	Syrians under temporary protection
THLFS	Turkish Household Labor Force Surveys
TKYB	Development Investment Bank of Türkiye
TOBB	Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Türkiye
TPR	Temporary Protection Regulation
UN	United Nations
UN DESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UNHCR	UN High Commissioner for Refugees

Regional Classifications Used in This Report

		European Union (EU)				
		Western EU	**Southern EU**	**Central EU**	**Northern EU**	**Western Balkans**
Europe and Central Asia	EU and Western Balkans	Austria Belgium France Germany Ireland Luxembourg Netherlands (Before January 31, 2020, Western EU included the United Kingdom.)	Cyprus Greece Italy Malta Portugal Spain	Bulgaria Croatia Czechia Hungary Poland Romania Slovak Republic Slovenia	Denmark Estonia Finland Latvia Lithuania Sweden	Albania Bosnia and Herzegovina Kosovo Montenegro North Macedonia Serbia
		Caucasus	**Central Asia**	**Russian Federation**	**Tűrkiye**	**Eastern Europe**
	Eastern Europe and Central Asia	Armenia Azerbaijan Georgia	Kazakhstan Kyrgyz Republic Tajikistan Turkmenistan Uzbekistan			Belarus Moldova Ukraine
	EFTA (Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland) and United Kingdom					

Other country groups mentioned in this report:

EFTA: Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland

EU (European Union): Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden. Before January 31, 2020 (Brexit), the EU member states included the United Kingdom.

EU-15: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom (EU member states before May 1, 2004)

Northern EU-15: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Sweden, United Kingdom

Southern EU-15: Greece, Italy, Portugal, Spain

EU-28: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom (coincides with EU before January 31, 2020).

EU-NMS13: Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovak Republic, Slovenia

Western Europe: Before January 31, 2020, included EU-15 and EFTA. After January 31, 2020, included Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, EFTA and the United Kingdom.