



# The Refugee and Migrant Crisis in the EU The Potential Implications for the UK

## Summary

1. In 2015 and the first quarter of 2015 1.67 million asylum applications were received in EU member states. Just under 792,000 of these applications have been decided and 435,000 have been granted some form of protection at initial decision and an additional 26,000 on appeal. Assuming that outstanding applications are granted protection at the same rate then the **total number granted protection could be 968,000**. Once their right to family reunion is taken into account, and assuming that each is followed by four additional family members, the total inflow of refugees and their families members could total 4.8 million.

2. If, for illustrative purposes, between 5% and 10% subsequently moved to the UK this could lead to an inflow of between 240,000 and 480,000 over a number of years from 2020 onwards as refugees acquire EU citizenship and the right to free movement. This takes no account of further arrivals in the EU, whether from Turkey or North Africa.

3. The inflow into the EU has slowed since the Turkish authorities agreed to readmit migrants entering the EU from their territory. However, an estimated 800,000 migrants are waiting in Libya for better weather before attempting the crossing to Italy.

4. The scale of secondary flows to the UK from future migration flows to the EU is heavily dependent on whether a compulsory relocation mechanism is introduced into the recast Dublin Regulation, now anticipated at some point in 2016, since these are the most likely migrants to move on. They are also, of course, dependent on whether the deal with Turkey survives and further inflows from the Middle East and Africa can be effectively prevented.

## Introduction

5. This paper is a first attempt to assess the potential onward flow to the UK of migrants, mainly from the Middle East but also from Asia and Africa who have arrived in the EU in 2015 and the first few months of 2016 and who have already been granted, or can expect to be granted, refugee status in continental EU Member States.

6. It suggests that, even if a relatively small proportion choose to move on, the numbers could be significant for the UK which is already facing mass migration. The paper examines the “push” factors that might cause refugees to move on and the “pull” factors that might make them choose the UK for their eventual destination.

## Arrivals, Asylum Applications and Decisions

### Arrivals

7. In 2015 Frontex recorded around 1.8 million illegal crossings into the EU.<sup>1</sup> Some of these will be people crossing twice, first into Greece and then again into Croatia or Hungary after having left the EU via Greece’s northern border. In all Frontex estimated that over 1.3 million people entered the EU in 2015.

8. In 2016 almost 156,000 people have been recorded by the UNHCR as entering Greece in the period up to mid May while a smaller number, 38,000, have entered Italy from North Africa.<sup>2</sup> However, 80% of those who arrived in Greece so far this year came in the first two months of the year. Migrants have arrived in Greece at the rate of just under 50 a day in May compared to 1,570 a day in January and February.

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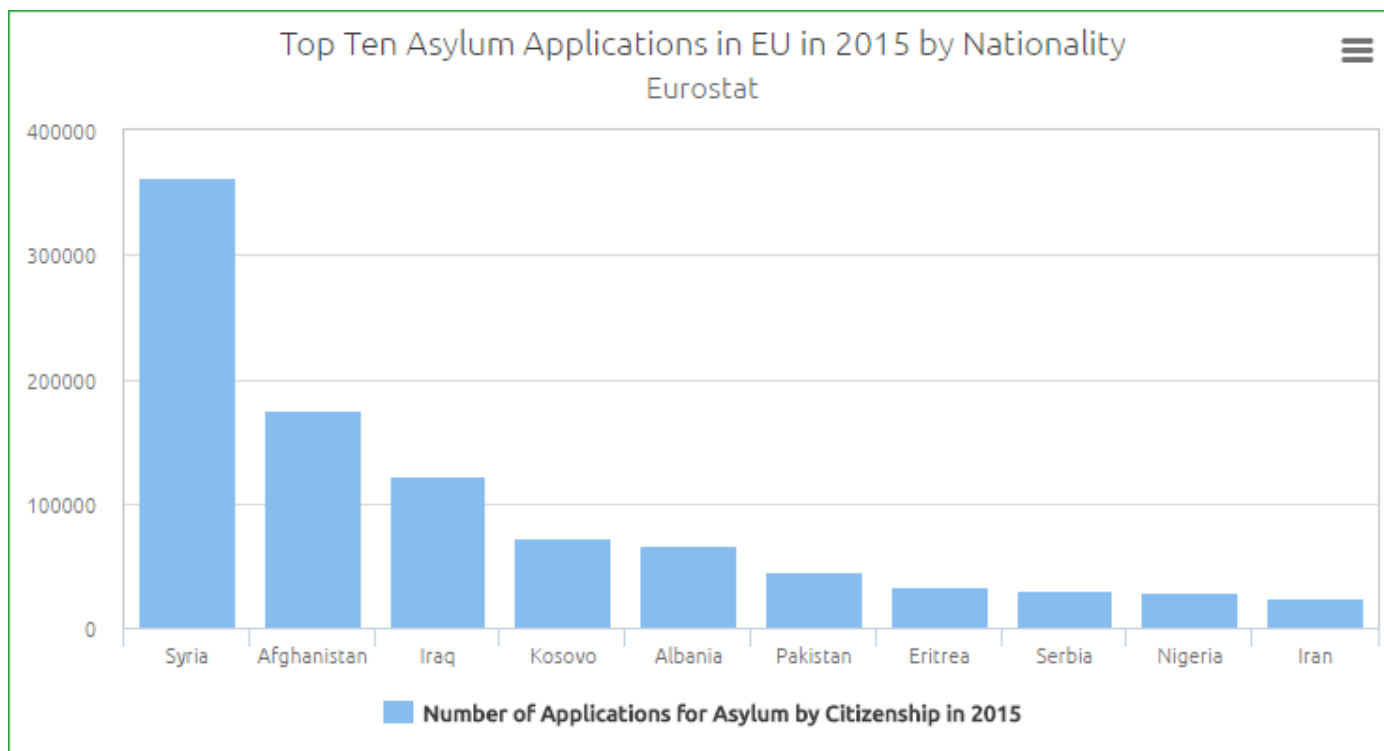
1 Frontex, URL: <http://frontex.europa.eu/trends-and-routes/migratory-routes-map/>

2 UNHCR, URL: <http://data.unhcr.org/mediterranean/regional.php>

## Asylum Applications

9. In 2015 1.32 million applications for asylum were lodged in the EU.<sup>3</sup> The largest number, 368,000 or 28%, were from Syrian nationals. The top ten nationalities that claimed asylum in the EU last year are shown in the following bar chart.

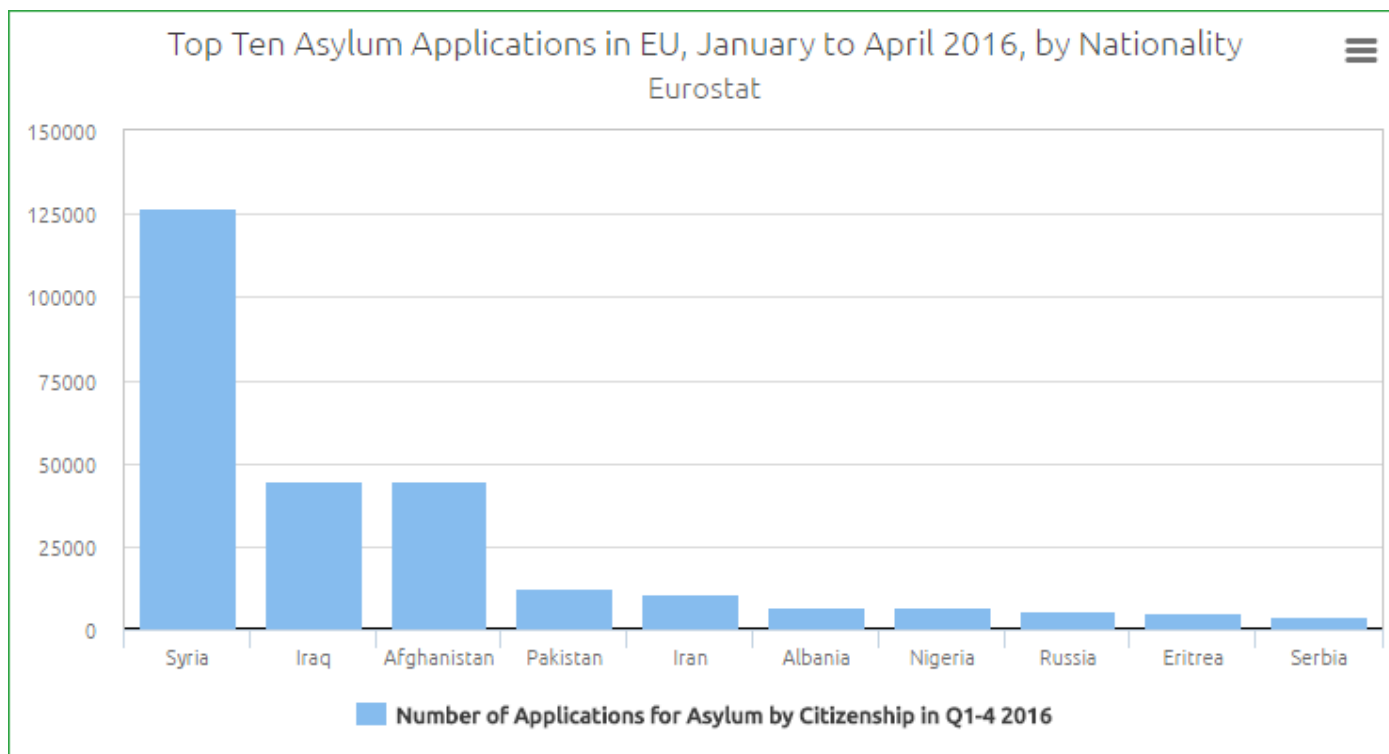
Figure 1. Top Ten Asylum Applications in EU in 2015 by Nationality. Eurostat.



10. In the first four months of 2016, 346,000 applications for asylum have been lodged in the EU, 127,000 (37%) of which are from Syria. The chart below shows the top ten nationalities of asylum applicants in the first four months of 2016.

<sup>3</sup> All data on asylum applications and decisions is derived from the EUROSTAT database and is up to date at the time of publication.

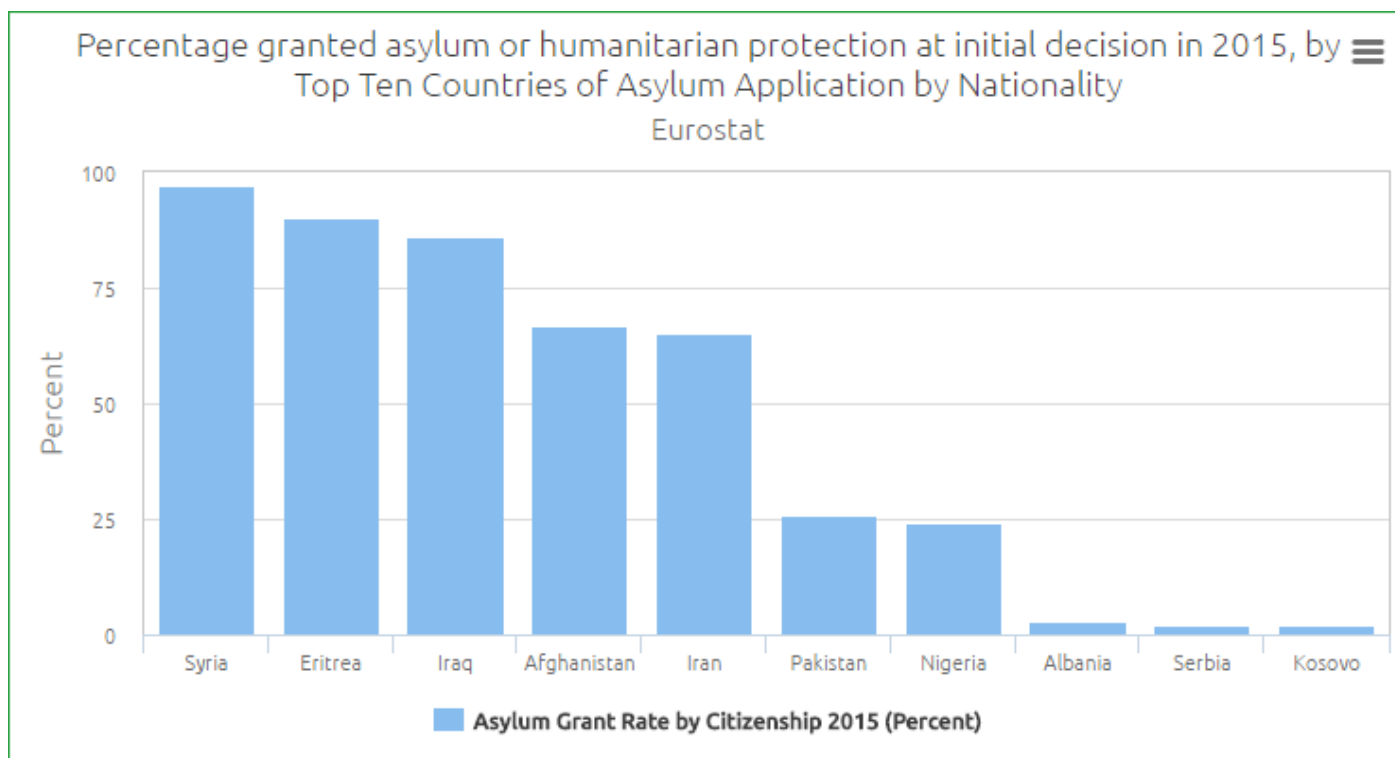
Figure 2. Top Ten Asylum Applications in EU, January to April 2016, by Nationality. Eurostat.



## Decisions

11. Nationalities vary significantly in their asylum success rate reflecting the conditions in their home country. The success rates in 2015 (grants of asylum or humanitarian protection) of each main nationality (at first hearing) are displayed in the bar chart below.

Figure 3. Percentage granted asylum or humanitarian protection at initial decision in 2015, by Top Ten Countries of Asylum Application by Nationality. Eurostat.



12. In total 593,000 cases were heard in 2015. Of these 52%, (308,000) were successful at initial decision. Over half of those receiving a positive decision in 2015 were Syrian.

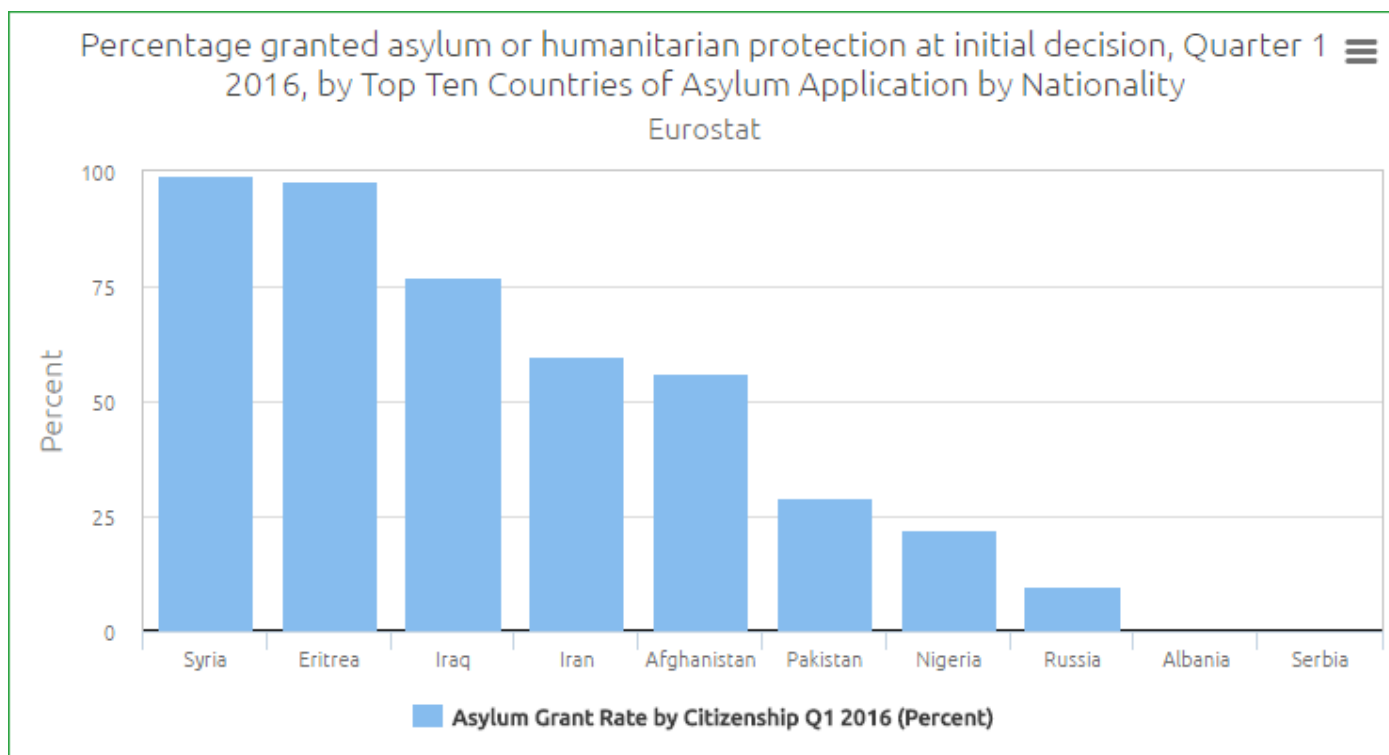
13. Those denied asylum at first decision have a right of appeal under Article 26 of EU Directive 2013/33/EU.<sup>4</sup> In 2015, 182,705 appeals were lodged, of which 25,730 received a positive decision and 156,975 were rejected. Therefore in 2015 a total of 333,000 applicants for asylum received a positive decision, a grant rate of 56%.

14. A different pattern has emerged in the first quarter of 2016 with the percentage receiving a positive decision increasing.

15. Just over 199,000 decisions have been made in 2016 of which 127,000 (64%) have been positive. The higher grant rate appears to be largely due to the changing composition of those applying for asylum. Albanians, Serbians and Kosovar (who have very low asylum success rates) form a smaller percentage of those applying for asylum in 2016 than in 2015. As yet there is no data on appeals for the first quarter of 2016 as this data is published only for full calendar years.

4 <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32013L0033&from=EN>

Figure 4. Percentage granted asylum or humanitarian protection at initial decision, Quarter 1 2016, by Top Ten Countries of Asylum Application by Nationality. Eurostat.



### Outstanding Applications

16. EUROSTAT data on asylum applications and outcomes is not what is known as “cohort” data thus some decisions made in 2015 relate to applications made in 2014. That said, we can broadly estimate that, since just 593,000 decisions were made in 2015, roughly 729,000 applications remain undecided. Similarly, for 2016 346,000 applications have been lodged but 199,000 decisions have been made, leaving 147,000 outstanding applications. **Thus a total of 876,000 applications remain outstanding.**

17. The total grant rate for 2015 and 2016 combined is 58%. Assuming this continues, then around 508,000 of those outstanding applicants would receive a positive decision of either asylum or humanitarian protection. **This brings the total number of people that might be granted asylum or humanitarian protection as a result of applications made in 2015 and the first quarter of 2016 to 968,000.**

18. The table below provides a summary of paragraphs 9-17.

Table 1. Summary of Eurostat data on applications and outcomes in 2015 and Q1 2016.

Asylum Applications and Outcomes 2015 and 2016	
<b>Applications</b>	<b>1667625</b>
Lodged in 2015	1321600
Lodged in Q1 2016	346025
<b>Decisions</b>	<b>791900</b>
Decided in 2015	592845
Decided in Q1 2016	199055
<b>Positive (First Instance Decisions)</b>	<b>434770</b>
2015	307620
Q1 2016	127150
<b>Positive (Final Decisions on Appeal)</b>	<b>25730</b>
2015	25730
2016	no data available
<b>Total Positive Decisions</b>	<b>460500</b>
<b>Outstanding</b>	<b>875725</b>
Lodged in 2015	728755
Lodged in Q1 2016	146970
<b>Potential Positive Decisions of Outstanding Applications (Assuming 58% Grant Rate)</b>	<b>508000</b>

## Family Members

19. Once granted protection in an EU Member State refugees and recipients of international protection have the right to bring their family members to join them.

20. EU Directive 2011/95/EU<sup>5</sup> requires member states to issue renewable residency permits to family members (encompassing spouses, minor children and parents in the case of child refugees) for a period of three years. For those granted humanitarian protection, family members must be issued with residence permits for at least one year.

21. A German government report, leaked to Bild in October 2015, estimated that each asylum seeker granted refugee status would be followed by between four and eight family members.<sup>6</sup> We have taken the lower of these two figures in making our estimates.

5 <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32011L0095&from=EN>

6 <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/oct/05/germany-now-expects-up-to-15-mln-migrants-in-2015-report>

## Future Arrivals

22. In their Autumn 2015 Economic Forecast the European Commission estimated that between Quarter 4 2015 and the end of 2017 an additional three million migrants would enter the EU illegally.<sup>7</sup> However at the time of publication in November the migrant crisis was at its peak with over 220,000 people arriving in Greece and Italy in the previous month alone. It now seems unlikely that an inflow on this scale will take place.

23. To begin with the European Union has agreed a deal with Turkey whereby every migrant who lands in Greece from Turkey will be returned to Turkey.<sup>8</sup> In exchange for every Syrian returned to Turkey one Syrian will be resettled in the EU. In return Turkey will receive €6 billion in support and has been offered visa free travel to the Schengen zone for its citizens, on condition that the 72 requirements of the visa free 'roadmap' are met.<sup>9</sup>

24. The aim of the deal is to stop the flow of migrants across the Aegean by breaking the link between arriving in the EU and remaining there. The deal has certainly stemmed the flow, at least for the time being, with just 50 arriving per day in Greece in May compared to 1,570 per day in January and February of 2016.

25. There is a possibility that the deal might not endure. President Erdogan has considerable leverage over the EU and he might threaten to renege on his commitments in order to extract further concessions from the European Union. If he were to overplay his hand the deal might collapse.

26. In addition, many countries have closed their borders thus limiting the ability of migrants to travel freely to their preferred destinations of Germany and Sweden. Borders have been closed by non-EU member states such as Macedonia as well as EU member states like Slovenia, Croatia and Austria. This has left thousands of migrants stuck in Greece and appears to have deterred others from making the initial crossing.

27. However, both Europol and Interpol have confirmed that 'in Libya alone, 800,000 migrants are waiting to travel to the EU.'<sup>10</sup> They also expect that there will be an increase in migrants trying to reach the EU. People smugglers may well refocus their efforts on this route now that the Greek-Turkish border is no longer open.

28. There is very little scope for a solution to the movement of people from North Africa to Italy akin to the EU-Turkey deal due to the political situation in Libya. While many have raised questions about Turkey, there is at least a government with which to do a deal and the European Commission has for some time

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7 See here for Box 1.1, A first assessment of the macroeconomic impact of the refugee influx, in Autumn 2015 Forecast, November 2015, URL: [http://ec.europa.eu/economy\\_finance/eu/forecasts/2015\\_autumn/box1\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/economy_finance/eu/forecasts/2015_autumn/box1_en.pdf)

8 For further reading on this see an earlier Migration Watch UK blog, URL: <http://news.migrationwatch.org.uk/2016/03/21/eu-turkey-agreement>

9 For further reading see Migration Watch UK Briefing Paper 379, 'Visa Free Access to the EU for Turkish Citizens', April 2016, URL: <http://www.migrationwatchuk.org/briefing-paper/379>

10 Joint Europol Interpol Report, 'Migrant Smuggling Networks, May 2016, URL: <https://www.europol.europa.eu/content/europol-and-interpol-issue-comprehensive-review-migrant-smuggling-networks>



considered Turkey to be a 'safe country' on the grounds that there is a democratic system and that there is 'generally and consistently':

- no persecution;
- no torture or inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment;
- no threat of violence;
- no armed conflict.<sup>11</sup>

29. The above does not apply to Libya and would probably not apply to Egypt. Since the EU Turkey deal relies on Turkey's designation as a safe country it would not be possible for a similar solution to be found with the countries in North Africa from where many migrants will cross into Italy.<sup>12</sup>

30. In short, therefore, there are so many imponderables that a firm estimate of numbers is not possible. However it seems unlikely at present that the Commission estimate of three million arrivals will come to pass, at least in such a short timescale.

## Implications for the UK

31. The UK has been largely shielded from the migrant crisis thus far. There was a moderate increase in asylum applications in 2015 compared to 2014. Geography is the principal reason for this with the majority of migrants remaining on the continent. The UK also has an 'opt in' to the area of Justice and Home Affairs which includes the European Common Asylum Policy and has chosen not to participate in European Commission initiatives to address the pressure on member states at the external border of the EU. This includes the temporary relocation mechanism whereby member states must take a share of 160,000 migrants relocated from Greece and Italy.

32. That said, the UK government has committed to resettling 20,000 Syrians currently living in refugee camps in Syria over the next five years and has also agreed to relocate an unspecified number of unaccompanied asylum seeking children from elsewhere in the EU (so long as they can prove that they arrived in the EU before the EU Turkey deal was agreed so as to minimize any incentives for children to travel alone to the EU or be sent ahead by family members in troubled regions).

33. The UK has a legal obligation to unaccompanied asylum seeking children in other EU member states who have family members living in the UK. In the short term there is likely to be a few hundred children who will therefore be transferred to the UK in order to have their asylum claims heard.

34. In the longer term the picture is different. Those granted refugee status in the EU have the legal right to citizenship as the Refugee Convention confers a responsibility on all signatories to facilitate access to naturalization.

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11 [http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/background-information/docs/2\\_eu\\_safe\\_countries\\_of\\_origin\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/background-information/docs/2_eu_safe_countries_of_origin_en.pdf)

12 For further reading on this see an earlier Migration Watch UK blog, URL: <http://news.migrationwatch.org.uk/2016/04/27/the-eu-turkey-deal-could-a-similar-deal-be-struck-with-north-african-countries>

35. Once those granted refugee status are granted citizenship they will have full free movement rights across the EU and therefore the right to live and work in the UK, as will their family members.

36. Member states have control over their own citizenship policies so each member state has a different pathway to citizenship. The majority of asylum seekers have so far gone to Germany where people must be legally resident for six years before they are eligible for citizenship. The residency requirement period for Hungary and Sweden is much shorter, three and four years respectively. Below is a table which shows the residency period which those granted refugee status must fulfill before they are eligible for citizenship.

Table 2. Residency Period Required for Naturalization, Top Ten Member States by Asylum Applications in 2015.

Member State	Number of Asylum Apps 2015	Citizenship Residency Requirement
Germany	477,000	6 years (8 years for non-refugees)
Hungary	177,000	3 years (5 years for non-refugees)
Sweden	62,000	4 years (5 years for non-refugees)
Austria	81,000	6 years (10 years for non-refugees)
Italy	78,000	5 years (10 years for non-EU non-refugees)
France	59,000	5 years but possible waived
Netherlands	45,000	5 years
Belgium	45,000	2 years (3 years for non-refugees)
United Kingdom	36,000 (Eurostat) 32,000 (HO)	5 years
Switzerland	35,000	12 years

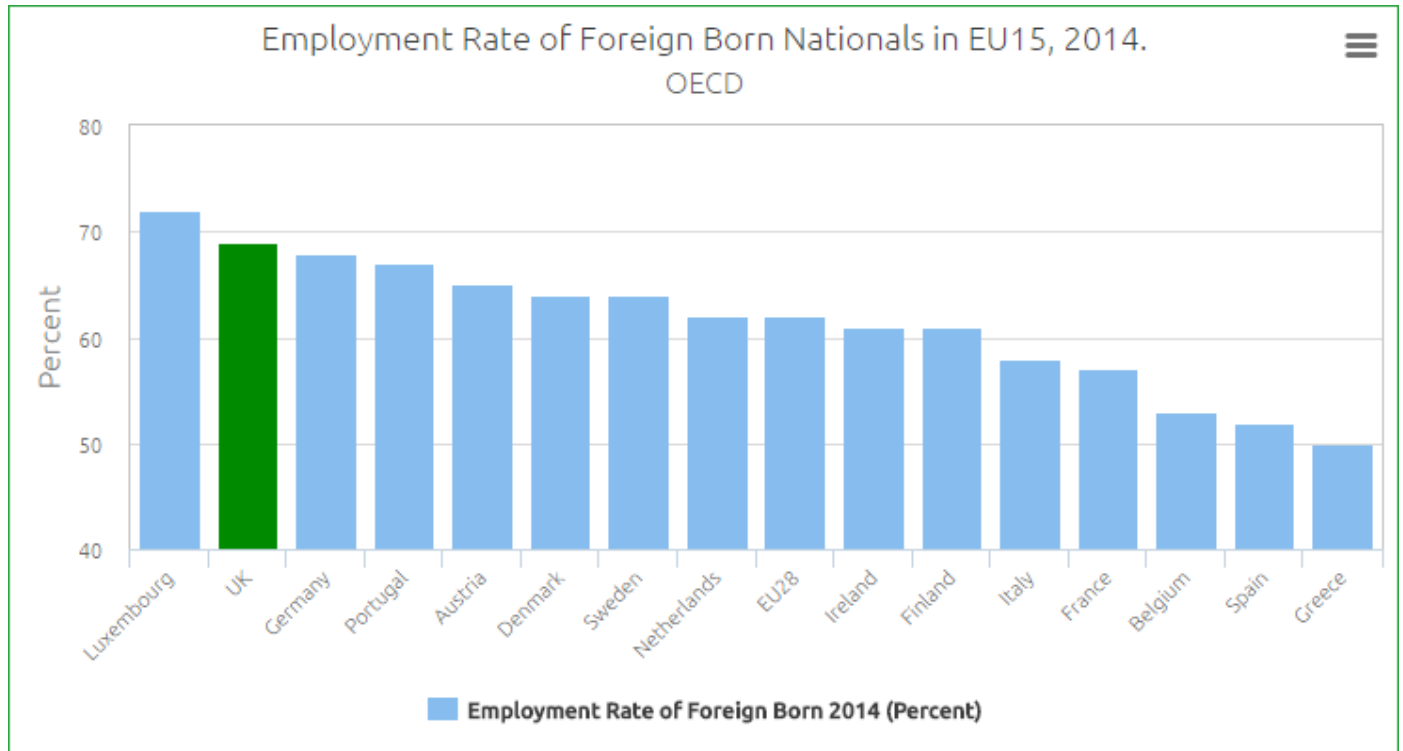
37. There are considerable push and pull factors that will influence subsequent movements around Europe and specifically to the UK.

## Onward movement within the EU - Push factors

### a) Availability of work.

The primary determinate of whether refugees move on is likely to be their economic circumstances and prospects. The employment rates for foreign-born nationals in the EU are illustrated in the bar chart below. The UK is just above Germany and well above Italy, France and Spain.

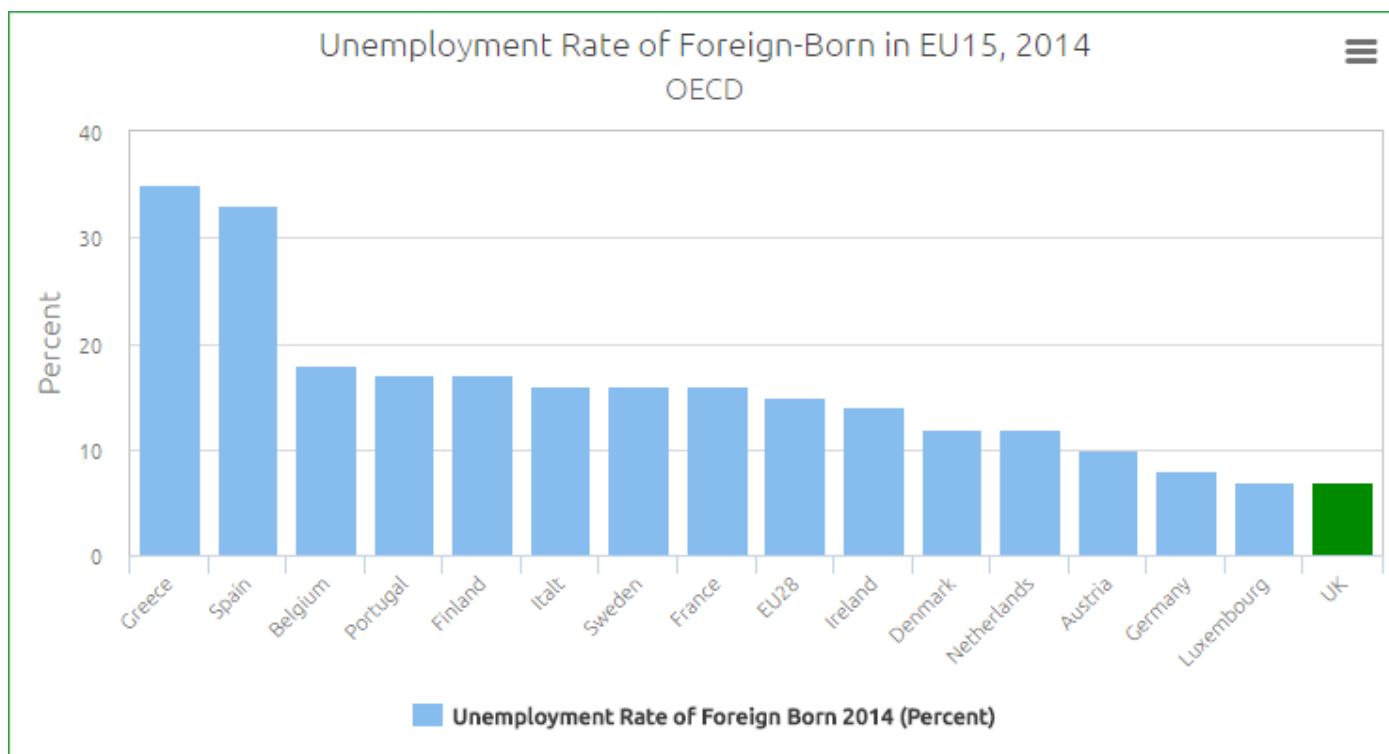
Figure 5. Employment Rate of Foreign Born Nationals in EU15, 2014. OECD.<sup>13</sup>



The unemployment rate for foreign-born nationals in the EU is displayed in the bar chart below. The UK has the lowest unemployment rate – less than Germany and about half that in Italy and France, or a quarter of that in Spain.

13 OECD Data on Foreign Born Employment Rates, URL: <https://data.oecd.org/migration/foreign-born-employment.htm#indicator-chart>

Figure 6. Unemployment Rate of Foreign-Born in EU15, 2014. OECD.<sup>14</sup>



In two of the main destination countries for asylum seekers in 2015, Germany and Sweden, labour market conditions make it more difficult for those who lack skills. Both countries have highly skilled labour forces and a small number of low skilled jobs which are often essential for initial entry into the labour market. Moreover, a lack of local language skills makes it difficult to enter the labour markets of both these countries.<sup>15</sup>

### b) Standard of living

North West Europe is richer than Southern Europe, and much richer than Eastern Europe. When refugees are free to move within Europe this is likely to be an important consideration. Intra-EU flows already show considerable movement from South and East to North and West for this very reason.

### c) Scope for integration

The nature of the reception for refugees will be affected by the total numbers and, particularly going forward, by whether there is a compulsory relocation scheme among EU members. In some countries refugees may face hostility that might cause them to consider moving on.

14 OECD Data on Foreign Born Unemployment, URL: <https://data.oecd.org/migration/foreign-born-unemployment.htm#indicator-chart>  
 15 Granato, N., (2014) 'A Work in Progress: Prospects for Upward Mobility Among New Immigrants in Germany', Migration Policy Institute, URL: <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/sites/default/files/publications/DG-Employment-Germany-Final.pdf>, Burkert, C., and Haas, A., (2014) 'Investing in the Future: Labor Market Integration Policies for New Immigrants in Germany', Migration Policy Institute, URL: <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/sites/default/files/publications/GermanyEmpl-Policy.pdf>, and Bevelander, P., and Irastorza, N., (2014), 'Catching Up: The Labor Market Outcomes of New Immigrants in Sweden', Migration Policy Institute, URL: <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/sites/default/files/publications/DG%20Employment-Sweden-FINALWEB.pdf>

#### **d) Language**

This, of course, is the key to successful integration. Very few Syrians speak German, some speak French, while a fair number will have some English. Furthermore, some languages such as Hungarian are notoriously difficult. Countries are however likely to provide language courses for refugees.

#### **e) Climate**

Syria has a moderately hard winter, especially at higher altitudes but Syrians would find the winter in Eastern Europe rather difficult and this might be one of many reasons why some might wish to move on.

## **Onward movement within the EU - Pull factors to the UK**

The main factors are clear:

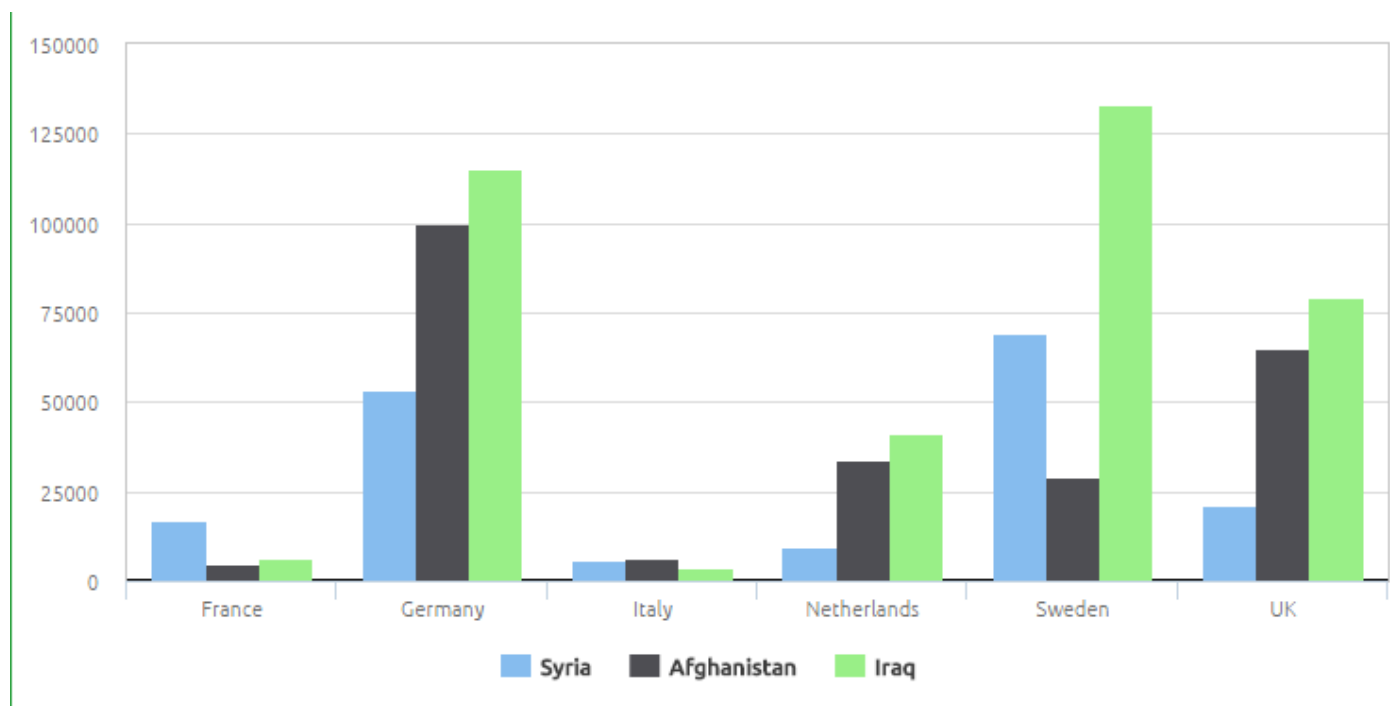
#### **a) Economic opportunity.**

The UK is one of the most prosperous countries in the EU with a high employment rate (and a low unemployment rate) for the foreign-born. There is also a large number of low skilled jobs available requiring few skills and little local knowledge.

#### **b) Existing communities**

This is probably the most important pull factor. The stock of international migrants in Germany, France, Italy, Sweden, Netherlands and the UK are shown in the bar chart below.

Figure 7. International Migrant Stocks, 2015. UN.<sup>16</sup>



There are relatively few Syrians in the UK compared to Germany and Sweden. The 2011 Census found 8,400 people born in Syria living in the UK, a figure which UN data suggests has more than doubled in 5 years to 21,000. However, the existing community of Afghans and Iraqis in the UK is significant. Existing communities assist migrants in finding employment and housing and provide a 'ready made' community into which they can integrate.

### c) Language

English is now the primary international language and is, of itself, a pull factor. Many will already have some knowledge of it.

### d) A free society

Migrants find a free society with respect for human rights, the rule of law and an aversion to discrimination that are in stark contrast to their countries of origin. The UK might be an attractive destination for people due its particular reputation for tolerance and fairness.

## Potential Secondary Movement to the UK

38. The analysis outlined above suggests that a significant number of refugees are likely to consider an onward move to the UK once they have gained EU citizenship. They will also, of course, have the right to

16 United Nations, International Migrant Stock by Origin and Destination, URL: <http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/data/estimates2/estimates15.shtml>

bring their families.

39. Much will depend on how refugees are received in their first country of refuge, and this will be affected by the success of the temporary relocation schemes whereby 160,000 migrants are to be relocated to other member states from Greece and Italy where they will have their asylum applications assessed. At present just 1,656 asylum seekers have been relocated.<sup>17</sup>

40. Of course those migrants refused refugee status would not become EU nationals and would have no right to enter the UK.

41. If, for illustrative purposes, between 5% and 10% of those have been and will be (assuming 58% of outstanding applications are granted protection, see paragraph 16-17) granted refugee status or humanitarian protection in 2015 and the first quarter of 2016 subsequently moved to the UK after being granted citizenship then this would entail an inflow of between 48,000 and 96,000.

42. Since refugees and protected persons have the right to bring their family members to the EU, the inflow would in fact be larger. The German authorities estimate that each refugee will subsequently bring between four and eight family members with them. We have taken the lower estimate that each refugee brings in four family members. This would give a total inflow to the UK which could be between 240,000 and 480,000 if between 5% and 10% subsequently moved to the UK.

43. It should be noted that a very large number of asylum grants have been in Germany. In 2015 45% of total grants of asylum in the EU were made by the German authorities and in the first quarter of 2016 this rose to 75%. Germany is providing a good standard of reception for asylum seekers and refugees. However, over the longer term, refugees may struggle in the labour market and possibly face hostility in some parts of Germany.

44. All of the above is dependent on the UK voting to remain a member of the European Union or free movement continuing if the UK did vote to leave but remained a member of the EEA. Were the UK to vote to leave the EU (without joining the EEA) and negotiated a new settlement on EU migration then it would be possible to restrict the movement of EU citizens. (This is, of course, is a statement of fact and not a comment on the merits or otherwise of "Brexit").

## Future Variables Impacting on Secondary Movement to the UK

45. The uncertainty about the number that might enter the EU in the coming years makes it extremely difficult to estimate any secondary inflow to the UK. That said, there are some additional variables that might affect any subsequent movement.

46. The European Commission has established a temporary relocation scheme but the German Chancellor Angela Merkel and the Commission are pressing for a compulsory redistribution of refugees as part of the recast Dublin Regulation. This would be based on the size and wealth of each member state as well

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17 As of 24<sup>th</sup> May 2016, URL: [http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/press-material/docs/state\\_of\\_play\\_-\\_relocation\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/press-material/docs/state_of_play_-_relocation_en.pdf)

as a Member State's previous record on asylum policy (applications and resettled refugees between 2010 and 2014) and unemployment rate.

47. There is considerable opposition to this proposal in many Eastern European countries and it is not yet clear whether or not a permanent relocation scheme will form a part of the recast Dublin Regulation anticipated at some point in 2016. If it does, the European Commission proposes that the East European countries (A8, A2 and Croatia) should be required to resettle 24% of refugees granted asylum in the EU.<sup>18</sup> It is likely that, under these circumstances, an even larger number could consider a secondary movement to Britain from certain areas. Many might choose to move on from Eastern Europe for economic reasons and, perhaps, in response to an initially hostile reception.

48. The possibility of a much larger proportion of refugees moving to the UK is by no means remote. Research has found that between a third and half of all Somalis granted refugee status in the Netherlands have moved to the UK.<sup>19</sup> It seems that the view emerged amongst the Dutch Somali community that London and the UK was home to a large minority community who also appeared to be doing very well. The UK was perceived as a place where economic opportunities existed and where people could get on.

## Conclusions

49. In 2015 and the first quarter of 2016 around 460,000 people have been granted refugee status or some other form of international protection. There remain 876,000 outstanding applications. Assuming that the overall grant rate of 58% continues then this could bring the total number of people granted asylum or protection to 968,000 for 2015 and Q1 2016. Once their right to family reunion is taken into account, the total inflow for this period could be around 4.8 million. If between 5% and 10% subsequently moved to the UK following acquisition of EU citizenship to which they will become entitled, this could mean an inflow of between 240,000 and 480,000 over a number of years from around 2020. Similar considerations would apply to subsequent arrivals granted asylum in the EU but there is no way, at this stage, to make any useful estimate of their numbers.

31st May 2016

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18 European Commission, Annex European Schemes for Relocation and Resettlement, URL: [http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/background-information/docs/communication\\_on\\_the\\_european\\_agenda\\_on\\_migration\\_annex\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/background-information/docs/communication_on_the_european_agenda_on_migration_annex_en.pdf)

19 Guardian, 'The British Dream: Why Europe's African Citizens come to Britain', 28 January 2013, URL: <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/jan/28/british-dream-europe-african-citizens> and BBC Radio 4, 'In Search of the British Dream', URL: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b01qfs5j/episodes/player>