

European Union

Topic 1: Immigration Reform

The EU began to address immigration policy in 1999. However, some member nations struggle with the balance between national sovereignty and intergovernmental cooperation. Many reforms serve as minimum requirements, and allow member nations to impose standards that are stricter on a nation-by-nation basis. On many issues, EU member nations must adopt standard practices and procedures to ensure uniformity in policies and allow for citizens of one member nation to move freely to other EU member nations.

Many of the earliest EU immigration reforms were implemented in an effort to integrate member nations and allow free movement and the virtual abolition of borders between European nations, such as the Schengen Agreement, which allows passport-free movement between many European nations. However, it is also important to focus on immigrants from outside of Europe. Over the past few decades the European Union member nations have been inundated with foreign immigrants, usually from Middle Eastern and Asian nations. Immigrants enter from Africa to Spain through the Canary Islands or through the EU's eastern border with the former Soviet Union. One estimate states that there are currently 8 million illegal immigrants in the EU, and half of this population entered the region legally but never left.

Many of those immigrating to the European Union are looking for asylum from their home countries. The biggest issue arisen from these massive immigrations is that the majority of immigrants are looking for asylum in the European Union. While one policy goal of the European Union is to harbor some of these people, the protections for asylum-seekers vary widely from nation to nation. Many believe that the European Union cannot harbor these refugees if they become a detriment to the societies in which they live, over-utilizing the valuable government programs provided in many European member nations and thriving off the taxes of the rich. European leaders are looking to set up a single asylum procedure with common rights and protections for those seeking asylum, while also allowing collaboration with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees in reallocating asylum seekers geographically across the region, to balance the burdens on nations on the edge of the geographic borders of the EU.

Another issue for the member nations of the EU to consider is the need for highly-skilled workers. Many immigrants come to the EU to escape poverty, and end up competing with poorer classes in many nations for jobs. Proposals for a "blue card" system would rival the "green card" system in the United States in hopes of attracting engineers, nurses, and other workers with specific skills to EU member nations. The new system would give these workers rights that are similar to those enjoyed by citizens of EU member nations and make it easier for them to bring their families to the region. It would also allow these workers to move from one member nation within a few years of entry to the EU. However, many member nations still disagree on certain issues associated with the proposal, including the required qualifications for these workers and how much they should earn in wages.

The challenges of free movement between European nations, increase in foreign immigration to the EU member states, and need for skilled workers require immediate action and reform by the EU.

Questions:

1. How should inter-European movement be controlled? Is it best to have no borders between nations or should each member nation be able to set its own rules for entry?
2. How should the European Union deal with those who enter the region seeking asylum? Should policies be standardized across Europe or determined by each member nation? Should those countries receiving these individuals be able to send them to other parts of the region?
3. How can member nations individually and the EU as a whole attract qualified workers with specialized skill sets?

Resources:

1. http://ec.europa.eu/justice_home/fsj/immigration/fsj_immigration_intro_en.htm
The European Commission's webpage on immigration
2. http://www.oecdobserver.org/news/fullstory.php/aid/337/Immigration_in_the_European_Union:_problem_or_solution_.html
3. <http://www.ceps.eu/ceps/download/1667>
Background briefing on the EU immigration debate
4. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/7667169.stm>
BBC Q&A on EU Immigration Policy
5. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/4738063.stm>
BBC Q&A on the Schengen Agreement, allowing passport-free movement between many EU member nations.
6. http://www.cer.org.uk/pdf/briefing_813.pdf
An in-depth description of EU Migration Policy
7. http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/justice_freedom_security/free_movement_of_persons_asylum_immigration/index_en.htm
Helpful links on EU immigration policy
8. <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/europe.php>
The Migration Policy Institute page on European migration issues
9. http://www.epc.eu/TEWN/.../304970248_EU%20Immigration%20Pact.pdf
The European Policy Institute's brief on the EU Immigration Pact
10. <http://aei.pitt.edu/2898/>
An article on the changing parameters and considerations in EU immigration policy

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Topic 2: Economic Stability and Reform

Over the next few years the world economy is projected to come out of this disastrous world financial crisis. However, the European Union still faces and will eventually face major problems. The recession in Europe has been caused by the global financial crisis as a whole, a contraction in trade worldwide, and the corrections in housing markets in some economies. Labor markets have been hit hard, with unemployment increasing worldwide (to 11% in Europe). In 1997, the EU adopted the Stability and Growth Pact to ensure that member nations maintained budgetary discipline after the introduction of the Euro, and required agreeing member nations to limit annual budget deficits to no higher than 3% of gross domestic product (GDP) and a national debt lower than 60% of GDP. However, many member nations disregarded these standards as the financial crisis has deepened.

The affects on individual nations within the EU differ. The hardest hit in terms of GDP have been Baltic nations, such as Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. While Germany continues to be a leader in the area in terms of economic stability, many are worried about the country's recent practice of exporting much more than it has imported. This practice has hurt the economies of Portugal, Spain, and Greece, where wages rose faster than productivity and became too expensive, leading to heavy reliance on German imports. The financial situation in Greece may be the most dire of all EU member nations. Greek Prime Minister George A. Papandreou recently requested at least \$60 billion in aid to save the nation's economy. The financial problems in Greece are causing decreases not only in the value of the Euro, but are also straining the already weak economies of other European Union member nations who need to bail out Greece with large sums of money.

While these problems have been very destructive, they must be addressed now so that the European Union can focus on the future. EU officials consider the economy a top priority and the European Parliament plans to make reforms to the financial system and create new jobs to offset current high levels of unemployment. However, member nations have differing opinions on how to proceed. Some, including France, argue that Germany should help stabilize the economy in the area by boosting domestic demand to offset deficits elsewhere, such as in Mediterranean states. Germany is hesitant to do this, worried that it will undermine competitiveness in the marketplace, and instead would prefer reforms to make the Stability and Growth Pact much stricter, suspending aid to member nations who cannot meet certain thresholds. Other proposals include increased scrutiny of member nations' annual budgets and the creation of a European credit ratings agency. Whatever the European Union decides to do to address the economic crisis, it is clear that member nations must learn about how the current recession came to be and institute reforms to stop similar recurrences in the future.

Questions:

1. How can your country contribute to the stabilization of the economy of the European Union?
2. What measures can be taken by the European Union to improve current economic conditions and prevent future problems? Should more stable member nations assist those with the weakest economies?

3. What reforms should be considered by the European Union as a whole? What reforms should be the responsibility of an individual member nation?

Resources:

1. <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/02/27/business/global/27gcon.html>
An article about Germany's role and stability in the economic crisis
2. <http://topics.nytimes.com/top/news/international/countriesandterritories/greece/index.html>
A summary of the troubles faced by Greece in the world financial crisis
3. http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/expert/background_page/042-68823-039-02-07-907-20100210BKG68822-08-02-2010-2010-false/default_en.htm
European Parliament actions regarding economic reform and stability
4. <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/09/693>
EU Spring economic forecasts 2009-2010
5. http://europa.eu/pol/emu/index_en.htm
EU Activities in the policy area of economic and monetary affairs
6. <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&plugin=1&language=en&pcode=tsieb020>
Growth rate of GDP across EU member nations
7. http://ec.europa.eu/economy_finance/sgp/index_en.htm
EU Stability and Growth Pact
8. <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/965537a6-58fc-11df-90da-00144feab49a.html>
Article on EU leaders' options in addressing the economic problems of the region
9. <http://www.cer.org.uk/>
Centre for European Reform, a policy think-tank focusing on the EU
10. http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/economic-reports/index_en.htm
European Commission studies on the internal EU market

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Topic 3: European Union Armed Forces

The European Union lacks its own system of protection and often relies on member nations to provide defense. However, as European integration has progressed, many believe there is a need for unified armed forces to protect the European Union as a whole.

The first step towards the possible development of unified EU armed forces was the establishment of the Common Security Defense Policy. In 2003, the European Council adopted the European Security Strategy. The Strategy set out three objectives to defend the security of the EU and promote its values: to confront threats with conflict prevention practices (using civilian and military capabilities), to build security across Europe, and to promote multilateralism through international law.

The Lisbon Treaty, signed by 27 EU member nations in December 2007, provided clarifications to the Common Foreign and Security Policy and created the possibility of enhanced cooperation in defense. The Lisbon Treaty also provided that member nations must make civil and military capabilities available to the EU to implement the Common Security and Defense Policy, in coordination with the European Defense Agency. One of the most recent developments in EU military policy came in early 2009, when the European Parliament approved a proposal, supported by EU member nations including France and Germany, to establish a Synchronized Armed Forces Europe (SAFE). This initiative is seen as a first step towards the objective of establishing a European army. The EU also plans to create a council for cooperation of defense ministers and standards for training military personnel and operational doctrines.

While EU forces have participated in peacekeeping and humanitarian missions in parts of Europe and other areas of the world, current plans could broaden the scope of military cooperation. In a time of terrorism and pirates, some argue that integrated armed forces are a necessity to protect citizens and trade, and would bring the EU one step closer to its ultimate goal of European unification. However, others argue that this would place a larger burden on current member nations that have militaries. Some EU member nations historically have remained neutral on all defense issues and do not want to be forced to contribute to an integrated military.

Questions:

1. What are the potential impacts to your country's government and military if the European Union establishes integrated armed forces?
2. How should the integrated military structure be established? Who would command these forces? Should the system be voluntary for member nations who want to contribute or mandatory?
3. What should be the scope of EU military operations? Should such operations be limited to peacekeeping and humanitarian projects, or could an integrated EU military be involved in heavy fighting as part of international conflict?

Resources:

1. <http://ec.europa.eu/publications/booklets/others/84/en.pdf>
EU Guide to the Lisbon Treaty
2. http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/foreign_and_security_policy/cfsp_and_esdp_implementation/r00007_en.htm
Website of the Military Committee of the European Union
3. <http://www.europeaninstitute.org/EU-Facts/european-defence-timeline.html>
A timeline of European defense milestones in history
4. http://www.iss.europa.eu/nc/actualites/analysisbooks/select_category/14/article/cooperation-in-peacekeeping-among-the-euro-mediterranean-armed-forces/?tx_ttnews
Cooperation in Peacekeeping among Euro-Mediterranean armed forces
5. <http://www.eda.europa.eu/>
Website of the European Defence Agency
6. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/eu/4689736/Blueprint-for-EU-army-to-be-agreed.html>
Article on the SAFE project
7. http://www.rpfrance.eu/IMG/pdf/Guide_to_the_ESDP_nov_2008_EN.pdf
Guide to the European Security and Defense Policy
8. <http://www.comw.org/pda/0310unterseher.html>
Project on Defense Alternatives paper on the European Armed Forces
9. http://www.europesworld.org/NewEnglish/Home_old/Article/tabid/191/ArticleType/articleview/ArticleID/21629/Default.aspx
Article on the establishment of the SAFE program
10. <http://www.comw.org/pda/9911eur.html>
A case study of several EU member nations and their armed forces