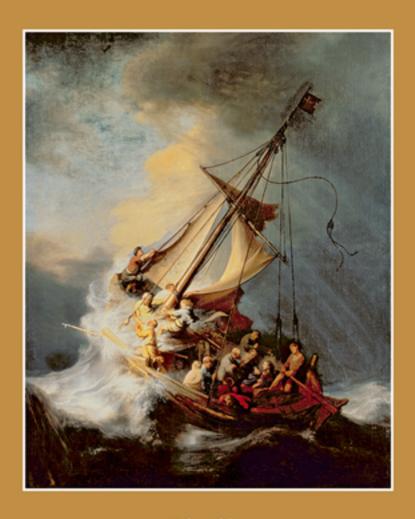
# **EU Migration Law**

Legal Complexities and Political Rationales



Edited by Loïc Azoulai and Karin de Vries

## THE COLLECTED COURSES OF THE ACADEMY OF EUROPEAN LAW

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VOLUME XXI/2 EU Migration Law

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# EU Migration Law

Legal Complexities and Political Rationales

Edited by
LOÏC AZOULAI
and
KARIN DE VRIES





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### 1

### Introduction

Loïc Azoulai and Karin de Vries

#### 1. The European Union as an Area of Migration

Migration constitutes a physical and social reality within the European Union (EU). Millions of persons circulate within Europe every year and millions cross the EU's external borders and seek to access the European territory. More importantly, migration has become a special feature of the self-understanding of the EU: the constitution and the very existence of the EU depends upon a continuing flow of persons crossing the borders of the member states (establishing an activity in another member state, studying abroad, travelling, or residing in another member state) and upon the management of the flows of third-country nationals (TCNs) knocking at the doors of the EU. This feature clearly appears in paragraph 2 of Article 3 of the Treaty on European Union (TEU) which sets out: 'The Union shall offer its citizens an area of freedom, security and justice without internal frontiers, in which the free movement of persons is ensured in conjunction with appropriate measures with respect to external border controls, asylum, immigration and the prevention and combating of crime'. Noteworthy in this formulation is the dichotomy between citizens and persons: Union citizens are offered an area where both Union citizens and certain non-citizens are conferred facilities to move within an area where access is placed under constant surveillance<sup>1</sup>. A European polity is made possible and tangible by the individual acts of migrants crossing the internal borders, developing a transnational life, and integrating into European societies. It is made tangible to the same extent by the individual or collective initiatives to cross the external borders and by the operations of control to which these initiatives are subject.

EU migration policy is the result of this definition and of these concrete actions. One might discern a double rationale at the basis of this policy. The first one is to be found in the first part of Article 3 of the TEU, which originates in a provision introduced by the Single European Act (now Article 26 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU)) which says: "The internal market shall comprise an area without internal frontiers in which the free movement of goods and persons is ensured'. Legal guarantees have been created to ensure

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> On the question of access, see P. Dumas, L'accès des ressortissants des pays tiers au territoire des Etats membres de l'Union européenne (2013).

freedom of movement, thus enabling intra-EU migration. In particular, Article 20 of the Schengen Borders Code provides: 'Internal borders may be crossed at any point without a border check on persons, irrespective of their nationality, being carried out'.<sup>2</sup> In reality, this liberty is nothing but the mere consequence of the programme initiated in the 1980s to complete the establishment of the internal market through the abolition of internal borders. This programme was the trigger for the development of common controls at the external borders of the EU, as well as European cooperation in the fields of asylum and immigration.<sup>3</sup> This rationale has been crudely put by the Commission in *Wijsenbeek*:

[A]bolition of [internal] controls concerns all persons, since the maintenance of controls for nationals of non-member countries at internal frontiers would mean that they would have to be distinguished from nationals of the Member States and that the latter would therefore also have to undergo controls. Consequently, special Community measures at the external borders would be necessary in order that no Member State has to deal with undesirable foreigners from non-member countries entering via another Member State.<sup>4</sup>

It is in this correlation between the abolition of internal borders and the loss of control over migration flows that the necessity originated to develop 'flanking policies' on migration (Amsterdam, Article 61(a) of the Treaty Establishing the European Community (TEC)), soon to become 'common' European migration policies (Lisbon, Articles 77, 78, and 79 of the TFEU). Alongside the establishment of a single European area without internal frontiers, the member states have increasingly sought to harmonize the conditions under which TCNs are granted access to their territories. Although Europeanization in the area of migration has been relatively recent, migration is today firmly established as part of the administrative and regulatory framework of the EU and there has been a gradual but certain growth of legislative and policy measures in this field.<sup>5</sup>

A second rationale driving the Europeanization of migration policies has emerged more recently. The Treaty of Amsterdam has introduced the EU objective of creating an 'Area of Freedom, Security, and Justice' (AFSJ) which is protective of TCNs. This was first expressed in Article 61(b) of the TEC: 'In order to establish progressively an area of freedom, security and justice, the Council shall adopt ... other measures in the fields of asylum, immigration and safeguarding the rights of nationals of third countries'. Now, Articles 67(2) and 79(1) of the TFEU provide that the common migration policies of the EU must be 'fair' towards TCNs and have the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Regulation 562/2006, [2006] OJ L105/1. See also Cases C-188/10 and C-189/10, *Melki and Abdeli*, [2010] ECR I-5667. However, TCNs are only allowed to circulate freely for a maximum of three months within a period of six months.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Cp. Art. K.1 of the Treaty of Maastricht, stating that policies on asylum, external border controls, and immigration shall be regarded as matters of common interest 'for the purposes of achieving the objectives of the Union, in particular the free movement of persons'.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Case C-378/97, Wijsenbeek, [1999] ECR I-6207, Rec. 28.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Visa procedures; the granting and withdrawing of asylum and other protection statuses; the admission of family members and highly qualified workers; and the return of irregularly staying migrants are but several examples of areas where there has been at least partial harmonization of national rules through EU legislation. The scope of EU migration policy stretches even wider, including issues such as the integration of TCNs, extraterritorial protection, and migration and development.

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purpose of ensuring the 'fair treatment' of TCNs legally residing in the territories of the member states. These treaties not only require that EU policies on migration comply with fundamental rights standards, but in addition provide the Union with a competence to *act* in order to safeguard TCNs' rights and fair treatment. It follows that the common European migration policy must provide standards for the entry and residence of TCNs in the member states that are adequate to meet the increasing demands deriving from fundamental rights norms in relation to immigration law. Although a definition of 'fair treatment' is not provided in the TFEU it can be assumed that this includes, at a minimum, compliance with the fundamental rights that are protected under the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR).<sup>6</sup> Whereas existing standards are most developed in relation to the fields of asylum and family reunification, there is growing evidence of the pertinence of fundamental rights norms to other topics of migration policy including, for example, access of TCNs to social security and other benefits and the treatment of irregular migrants.<sup>7</sup>

The 'fair treatment' or 'fundamental rights' rationale of EU migration law can be seen to have gained strength through the adoption of the Tampere Conclusions in 1999, which called, inter alia, for the approximation of the legal status and rights of long-term resident TCNs to those of nationals of the member states and for measures to combat discrimination. Ten years later, the objective of ensuring respect for the rights of TCNs was further strengthened through the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty which granted legally binding force to the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. It has not, however, obtained the same impetus as the internal objective of promoting the social integration of Union citizens. According to this objective, all the obstacles Union citizens may encounter when invoking their rights of free movement and residence within the territory of the member states should be lifted. Moreover, by virtue of their status of Union citizens conferred by the Treaty, which is deemed to be 'the fundamental status of the nationals of the Member States',8 Union citizens enjoy the right to equal treatment with the nationals of the host member state and a series of 'second-order rights' forged by the European Court of Justice (ECJ) followed by the EU legislator. In fact, Union citizens and their family members are granted a constitutional right to carry out a transnational life. There is no doubt that, in this respect, the situation of the

<sup>6</sup> Relevant international norms also include the provisions of the 1951 Refugee Convention; compliance with this is expressly required in Art. 78(1) TFEU in relation to the EU policy on asylum.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> See, eg Case C-329/11, *Achughbabian*, judgment (GC) of 6 December 2011, not yet published, Rec. 49 and Case C-571/10, *Kamberaj*, judgment (GC) of 24 April 2012, not yet published. The issue of non-discrimination of aliens as regards access to social benefits has been addressed in several recent judgments by the ECtHR, eg *Ponomaryovi v. Bulgaria*, ECHR (2011) Appl. No. 5335/05, 21 June 2011 and *Bah v. UK*, ECHR (2011) Appl. No. 56328/07, 27 September 2011.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Case C-184/99, Grzelczyk, [2001] ECR I-06193, Rec. 31.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> The expression is from Dougan, Judicial Activism or Constitutional Interaction? Policymaking by the ECJ in the Field of Union Citizenship', in H.-W. Micklitz and B. De Witte (eds), *The European Court of Justice and the Autonomy of the Member States* (2012) 113. These rights cover fields as diverse as the language in which criminal proceedings are conducted, the individual's freedom of choice over her name, the right to benefit from an education grant, the right to welfare benefits and tax advantages, and the right to organize one's succession.

TCNs stands in sharp contrast. As stated by the Court, the fundamental principle of non-discrimination on the ground of nationality 'is not intended to apply to cases of a possible difference in treatment between nationals of Member States and nationals of non-member countries'. 10 Equal treatment and residence rules for TCNs, when they exist, are entirely governed by regimes of secondary law and the facilities conferred on TCNs are subject to strict conditions and limitations. 11 Moreover, member states are granted considerable discretionary powers. Many of the migration measures adopted at the European level provide for derogations and exceptions to the general rules and the common standards. 12 Examples include the Family Reunification Directive (2003/86), the Long-term Residents Directive (2003/109), and the Blue Card Directive on the admission and conditions of residence of highly qualified third-country workers (2009/50). Under the latter Directive, the discretionary power of the member states to decide on the admission of TCNs remains so extensive that it would seem difficult to qualify such admission in terms of an individual 'right'. Quite apart from secondary legislation, Carrera's contribution in this volume describes how the reluctance of member states to cede competence to the EU in the field of TCN integration has led to the creation of a set of soft law and policy tools with limited transparency and accountability (see further section 3).

It must be noted that the combination of these two potentially conflicting rationales is likely to generate tensions within the structure of EU migration law. The complex interaction of protection against 'undesirable foreigners' with the objective to establish an internal area of prosperity, freedom, security, and justice has led to a structuration of the field which is very much organized around the distinction between legal and illegal migration. Whilst the fight against illegal migration has become a clear objective of the Union, legal migration is seen as an asset for Europe, taking into account in particular the fact that the EU population is growing older. In the long run, the integration of TCNs who are long-term residents in the member states is even said to be 'a key element in promoting economic and social cohesion' at the EU level. 13 This dichotomy unquestioningly endorsed by the European institutions as well as by the member states seems to work as a correlation according to which fighting illegal migration would be the only way to facilitate legal migration. However, in practice the distinction between illegal and legal migrants is not as clear-cut as one would assume. First of all, the conditions of illegality as well as the ability to receive legal migrants still very much depend on the legal framework of each member state and vary from one to the other. Secondly, there are limbo situations in which individuals, whilst being regarded as illegal migrants, cannot be removed from the European territory for

<sup>13</sup> Long-term Residents Directive, supra n 11, Rec. 4.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> Cases C-22/08 and C-23/08, Vatsouras and Koupatantze, [2009] ECR I-04585, Rec. 52.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> See, eg the Long-term Residents Directive: Council Directive 2003/109, [2004] OJ L16, Arts. 5 (right to long-term resident status, but conditional) and 11 (equal treatment conferred for certain purposes).

<sup>12</sup> De Bruycker, 'L'émergence d'une politique européenne d'immigration', in P. De Bruycker (ed.), L'émergence d'une politique européenne d'immigration (2004) 351.

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some compelling legal reasons.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, despite the introduction of the 'fundamental rights' rationale, EU migration policy appears to be predominantly characterized by controls and obligations. A clear example of this can be found in the Return Directive where the language of obligations prevails. Obligations are imposed on member states to issue a return decision or to issue an entry-ban decision under certain circumstances. The obligation to return imposed on individuals is balanced by a few procedural rights. Also illustrative are the border control operations carried out by Frontex (see the chapter by Trevisanut) and the asylum regime, the latter granting a right to access to procedures but without a right to access the European territory. All of these drawbacks reflect constitutive tensions in the development of EU migration law.

#### 2. The Structure of EU Migration Law and Policy

Compared to the broader body of EU law and policies, the field of migration has a number of specific characteristics. Since Toner further elaborates on some of these in her contribution to this volume, we will content ourselves with stating the most salient features.

First, migration law and policy fall under the EU competence to establish the AFSJ. Article 4(2)(j) of the TFEU specifies that, in establishing the AFSJ, the Union acts on the basis of a shared competence with the member states. Compared to the TEC, the Lisbon Treaty has slightly expanded the areas in which the EU is allowed to act within the migration field. However, the AFSJ is a very peculiar field of shared competence. First, it works on the premise that the member states enjoy a large discretion in relation to immigration control—in particular with regard to the conditions of admission to the national territory—and remain exclusively responsible with regard to the maintenance of law and order and the safeguarding of internal security (Article 72 of the TFEU). Moreover, it is a field of 'differentiation'. The UK, Ireland, and Denmark do not fully participate in these common policies, while third countries are associated with the development of the AFSJ (namely Iceland, Norway, Switzerland, and Liechtenstein). It is also well known that the UK, Ireland, Bulgaria, Romania, and Cyprus are not parties to the Schengen agreements, hence intra-EU migration to these countries continues to be subject to border controls.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> See European Commission, Study on the situation of third-country nationals pending return/removal in the EU Member States and the Schengen Associated Countries, Home/2010/RFXX/PR/1001, March 2013.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> New competences include the adoption of measures for the establishment of an integrated management system for external borders (Art. 77(2)(e) TFEU); for defining the rights of TCNs other than the right to free movement (Art. 79(2)(b) TFEU); for combating trafficking in persons (Art. 79(2) (d) TFEU); and for supporting member state action to promote the integration of TCNs (Art. 79(4) TFEU). In the field of asylum, the TFEU now provides a legal basis for the establishment of a truly 'Common' European Asylum System, going beyond the enactment of minimum standards (Art. 78). Lastly, the expansion of the external dimension of the EU's immigration policy is backed up by new competences to cooperate with third countries for the purpose of managing the inflows of people seeking protection (Art. 78(2)(g) TFEU) and to conclude readmission agreements (Art. 79(3) TFEU).

Secondly, as already mentioned, EU migration law is essentially a regime of secondary law. The position of individuals derives from EU secondary legislation and national law, rather than from the Treaties. There has not been a tendency towards constitutionalization comparable to that driving the law on the free movement of EU citizens. Following the Treaty of Amsterdam, decision-making procedures in the field of migration moreover reflected a high level of inter-governmentality. The point of departure was that the legislative measures required by Articles 62 and 63 of the TEC were to be adopted unanimously by the Council with only a consultative role for the European Parliament. It is here that the Lisbon Treaty has introduced some important and often-mentioned institutional changes. Subject to only a few limited exceptions, <sup>16</sup> EU measures on immigration are now to be adopted by means of the ordinary legislative procedure, requiring agreement from the European Parliament and qualified majority voting in the Council. Nevertheless, Union legislation remains the product of programmes<sup>17</sup> which lead to institutional battles. <sup>18</sup> National parliaments have, moreover, emerged as new potentially important actors after Lisbon, as illustrated by the high number of reasoned opinions issued in relation to the proposed directive on seasonal employment.<sup>19</sup>

A third important feature of this field is the emergence of a body of global and European norms that may be classified as 'international migration law'. This is the result of the growing movement of people across national borders that has occurred in the course of the past decades. The development of international norms generally predates the enactment of EU legislation in various fields of migration policy (including asylum, family reunion, and labour migration) and thus serves as a source of reference for EU law. Importantly, the fact that certain aspects of migration policy are now also governed by EU law does not absolve the member states from the obligation to respect their commitments under international law. This means that the international treaties to which the member states are parties do not serve only as a source of inspiration, but also as a set of standards that they must adhere to including when implementing or acting in accordance with EU law.<sup>20</sup> The EU legal framework takes this into account most explicitly in Article 78(1) of the TFEU, which states that the measures constituting the Common European Asylum Policy must be in accordance with the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol. Not surprisingly, EU migration regulations make frequent reference to international law.<sup>21</sup> Additionally, as mentioned above, international

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> See Arts. 77(3) and 78(3) TFEU on measures concerning passports, identity cards, and similar documents and provisional measures to deal with sudden inflows of TCNs in emergency situations.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> J.-Y. Carlier and F. Crépeau, 'Le droit européen des migrations: exemple d'un droit en mouvement?' 57 Annuaire français de droit international (2011) 674.

<sup>18</sup> S. Carrera and E. Guild, 'Does the Stockholm Programme Matter? The Struggles over Ownership of AFSJ Multiannual Programming' (2012) CEPS Policy Paper 51.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> COM (2010) 379. According to a report issued by the Commission itself, this proposal attracted the highest overall number of opinions from national parliaments, with as many as nine chambers claiming that it breached the principle of subsidiarity (COM (2011) 345 final, at 7).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> On the relationship between EU law and international law, see H. Battjes, *European Asylum Law and International Law* (2006).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> See, eg Art. 1 of the Return Directive (EP and Council Directive 2008/115, [2008] OJ L348/98): 'in accordance with' and Art. 27 of the Procedures Directive (Council Directive 2005/85, [2008] OJ L239/6) on the application of the safe third country concept.

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law norms on migration derive from the provisions of the ECHR which must be respected as part of the general principles of EU law (Article 6(3) of the TEU) and, in the not too distant future, as treaty obligations that are binding not only on the member states but also on the EU itself (Article 6(2) of the TEU).

Another feature of EU policy on migration is externalization. Immigration is, by definition, a topic that touches upon both the internal and the external policy of the EU and its member states. It is, therefore, not surprising that the extension of EU legislative and policy-making activity into new sectors of the migration field has been accompanied by the expansion of the external dimension of EU migration policy.<sup>22</sup> This externalization has, first of all, a physical or territorial dimension: the operations carried out by Frontex take place at, but also beyond, the external borders of the EU, where immigrants are intercepted at sea. Another example concerns the introduction, by individual member states but within the confines of the EU migration directives, of integration tests and programmes in countries of origin. Externalization also has a legal and political dimension, which concerns the conclusion of agreements and cooperation between the EU and third countries. Since the Treaty of Amsterdam, the need for such cooperation, including in the field of immigration, has been consistently stressed by the European Council in its Tampere Conclusions and in the multi-annual programmes adopted in The Hague and Stockholm. In the meantime, the scope of EU immigration policy has expanded beyond the regulation of visa policies and border controls and into the domains of long-term migration and the combating of irregular migration. As demonstrated by Martenczuk in this volume, in each of these fields cooperation with third countries can be instrumental to achieving the EU's immigration objectives. Examples include agreements on visa waivers and visa facilitation, on local border traffic, on the readmission of TCNs who are not entitled to residence within the EU, and on migrant smuggling and trafficking in persons. It follows that, at the EU level, the policy fields of migration and external relations are becoming increasingly intertwined.

Finally, a word must be said about the role of the ECJ. The Court is not absent from this field. However, its positioning does not seem to be clearly settled yet and varies according to the instrument at issue. On the one hand, it tends to rely strongly on the aim of the various migration directives, as formulated by the Union legislator, rather than on constitutional principles derived from the Treaties.<sup>23</sup> On the other hand, it relies on respect for fundamental rights and the principles of proportionality and effectiveness to impose obligations on the member states and circumscribe the amount of discretion left to them. Illustrations of this dynamic can be found in the field of family reunification, where the Court was asked to

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> On the broadening scope of this external dimension see F. Trauner and H. Carrapiço, 'The External Dimension of EU Justice and Home Affairs after the Lisbon Treaty: Analysing the Dynamics of Expansion and Diversification' 17 European Foreign Affairs Review (2012) Special Issue, at 1.

<sup>23</sup> See, eg Case C-578/08, Chakroun, [2010] ECR I-1839; Case C-61/11, El Dridi, [2011] ECR

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> See, eg Case C-578/08, *Chakroun*, [2010] ECR I-1839; Case C-61/11, *El Dridi*, [2011] ECR I-3015; Case C-329/11, *Achughbabian*, judgment (GC) of 6 December 2011, not yet published; and Case C-430/11, *Md Sagor*, judgment of 6 December 2012, not yet published.