

THE SOCIAL LANDSCAPE OF CANADA AND EUROPE WITH FOCUS ON IMMIGRATION POLICIES IN THE 21ST CENTURY

SOCIÁLNE PROSTREDIE KANADY A EURÓPY V KONTEXTE MIGRAČNÝCH POLITÍK V 21. STOROČÍ

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Abstract (EN)

The article explores the social landscape of Canada and of the European Union (EU) with a focus on immigration and the social integration of immigrants, of asylum seekers or of persons seeking other forms of international protection due to their persecution, racial, religious, national grounds, holding political opinions, belonging to a social group in their countries. The article aims to analyse the policies of Canada and the EU in implementing the criteria of the Geneva Convention on the Status of Refugees (1951), into their policies and legislation. The research results show that Canada's approach to immigration in the twenty-first century reflects its longstanding identity as a country of immigration and its reliance on newcomers to support demographic stability, labour-market needs and social development. Canadian policy is grounded in the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA) of 2002, which established a modern framework balancing three core objectives: economic selection, family reunification, and humanitarian protection. Over the last two decades, Canada has admitted historically high numbers of immigrants and refugees, relying on a points-based system to attract skilled workers, while also expanding pathways for temporary residents, international students, and provincial nominee programs. The article further provides a comparative overview of the EU Member States' approaches towards the implementation of EU legislation, with particular attention to the Pact on Migration and Asylum (2024). The integration of migrants into host societies remains essential, given the EU's ageing demographic profile and the growing labour market shortages faced by employers. Over the last fifteen years, the locus of policymaking on asylum seekers and refugees has gradually shifted away from national governments and towards the European Union, as the Common European Asylum System has developed. In Canada, refugee protection remains a central pillar of Canada's migration model, combining overseas resettlement with inland asylum procedures. Canada is recognized as a global leader in private refugee sponsorship and continues to play a significant role in international resettlement efforts, receiving over 10 percent of global resettled refugees in recent years. Policy adaptations since 2000, including reforms to asylum procedures, enhanced security measures, and cooperation with the United States under the Safe Third Country Agreement, reflect an attempt to balance humanitarian commitments with effective system management.

Keywords (EN)

refugees, asylum, migrant integration, protection, benefits

Abstrakt (SK)

Príspevok skúma sociálnu situáciu Kanady a Európskej únie (EÚ) so zameraním na imigráciu a sociálnu integráciu imigrantov, žiadateľov o azyl alebo osôb hľadajúcich iné formy medzinárodnej ochrany z dôvodu ich prenasledovania z rasových, náboženských alebo národných dôvodov, zastávania politických názorov alebo príslušnosti k sociálnej skupine v ich krajinách. Cieľom článku je analyzovať politiky Kanady a EÚ pri implementácii kritérií Ženevského dohovoru o právnom postavení utečencov (1951) do ich politik a legislatívy. Výsledky výskumu ukazujú, že prístup Kanady k imigrácii v 21. storočí odráža jej dlhoročnú identitu ako krajiny imigrácie a jej závislosť od nových prisťahovalcov pri podpore demografickej stability, potrieb trhu práce a sociálneho rozvoja. Kanadská politika je založená na zákone o imigrácii a ochrane utečencov (IRPA) z roku 2002, ktorý vytvoril moderný rámec vyvažujúci tri základné ciele: ekonomický výber, zlúčenie rodiny a humanitárnu ochranu. Za posledné dve desaťročia Kanada prijala historicky vysoký počet imigrantov a utečencov, pričom sa spoliehala na bodový systém na prilákanie kvalifikovaných pracovníkov a zároveň rozširovala možnosti pre dočasných obyvateľov, zahraničných študentov a programy pre nominovaných utečencov z provincií. Článok ďalej poskytuje porovnávaci prehľad prístupov členských štátov EÚ k implementácii právnych predpisov EÚ, s osobitným dôrazom na Pakt o migrácii a azyle (2024). Integrácia migrantov do hostiteľských spoločností zostáva nevyhnutná vzhľadom na starnúci demografický profil EÚ a rastúci nedostatok pracovných síl, ktorému čelia zamestnávateľia. Za posledných pätnásť rokov sa ťažisko tvorby politik týkajúcich sa žiadateľov o azyl a utečencov postupne presúvalo z národných vlád smerom k Európskej únii, keďže sa rozvíjal spoločný európsky azylový systém. V Kanade zostáva ochrana utečencov ústredným pilierom kanadského migračného modelu, ktorý kombinuje presídľovanie do zahraničia s azylovými konaniami vo vnútrozemí. Kanada je uznávaná ako globálny líder v oblasti súkromného sponzorstva utečencov a naďalej zohráva významnú úlohu v medzinárodnom úsilí o presídľovanie, pričom v posledných rokoch prijala viac ako 10 percent celosvetovo presídlených utečencov. Úpravy politik od roku 2000, vrátane reforiem azylových konaní, posilnených bezpečnostných opatrení a spolupráce so Spojenými štátmi v rámci Dohody o bezpečnej tretej krajine, odrážajú snahu o vyváženú humanitárnych záväzkov s efektívnym riadením systému.

Kľúčové slová (SK)

utečenci, azyl, integrácia migrantov, ochrana, dávky

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I Introduction

The social environment in Canada and Europe in the twenty-first century has been significantly shaped by migration flows and the political responses to them. Canada has long positioned itself as a country of immigration, and its approach to immigration in the twenty-first illustrates its reliance on newcomers to support demographic stability, labour-market needs and social development. Canada's approach to accepting displaced people developed gradually, influenced largely by the presence and engagement of established immigrant communities. Their advocacy helped shape national attitudes toward resettlement and encouraged the government to create pathways for admitting selected groups of newcomers.⁽¹⁾ Canadian policy is grounded in the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA) of 2002, which established a modern framework balancing three core objectives: economic selection, family reunification, and humanitarian protection. Over the last two decades, Canada has admitted historically high numbers of immigrants and refugees, relying on a points-based system to attract skilled workers, while also expanding pathways for temporary residents, international students, and provincial nominee programs.

By contrast, the European Union faces complex challenges arising from irregular and forced migration, which have led to the adoption of reform measures, including the Pact on Migration and Asylum (2024)⁽²⁾. The migration movements that emerged in Europe following the onset of the global economic crisis in 2007 have remained among the most prominent and sensitive issues across European countries.⁽³⁾

The growing number of individuals seeking to reach Europe from the Middle East and Africa presents new challenges for the European Union (EU). The rising number of asylum applicants and migrants is driven by threats such as civil wars, genocide, and politicide, but also by persistent human rights violations, poverty, and the lack of economic opportunities in countries of origin.⁽⁴⁾ Refugee movements across Europe have consistently been multifaceted and ever-evolving, influenced by war, oppression, and environmental disruptions.⁽⁵⁾ The social consequences of migration are shaped by the characteristics of migration flows, which have undergone significant shifts as a result of global human development trends, transformations in labour markets, and various regional economic

and political integration processes.⁽⁶⁾ The number of asylum applications rose sharply in 2015 and 2016⁽⁷⁾, partly as a result of the deteriorating security situation in Syria and Libya. The scale and heterogeneity of new refugee arrivals make it difficult to predict inflows of asylum seekers from outside Europe. Nevertheless, future large-scale arrivals are highly probable, and asylum-related migration should therefore be regarded as a structural phenomenon.

The EU defines the aim of its common policy on asylum, subsidiary protection and temporary protection as "offering appropriate status to any third-country national requiring international protection and ensuring compliance with the principle of non-refoulement" (Article 78 Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union)⁽⁸⁾. Over the last fifteen years, the locus of policymaking on asylum seekers and refugees has gradually shifted away from national governments and towards the European Union, as the Common European Asylum System has developed. Most efforts have focused on harmonizing policies on border control, the processing of asylum claims, and reception standards for asylum seekers. Yet these measures still fall far short of a fully integrated EU-wide policy⁽⁹⁾.

II Material and Methods

The theoretical background of the paper is processed mainly through the interpretation of the Canadian and European Union migration policies and opinions of foreign and domestic authors who deal with the issue.

The article examines major Canadian and EU legislative frameworks: the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA) for Canada and the Pact on Migration and Asylum plus the broader Common European Asylum System (CEAS) for the EU. This includes interpreting legal documents, policy reforms, and government publications.

We examine to what extent the goals set by the Canadian and EU legislation have been met in fair long-term governance and normalization of migration and whether the outcome will be comparable and the same rights and obligations will apply throughout the Union.

We use data of EUROSTAT and analyse data on asylum seekers in the EU throughout 2013-2024, data on employment of immigrants in the EU as a whole and comparing it with Germany and France as countries

¹ Haines (2025)

² Pact on Migration and Asylum, n.d.a. (2024)

³ Malatinec, Urbančíková, Hudec (2020)

⁴ Angeloni and Spano (2018)

⁵ Panzaru, Harding (2025)

⁶ Lerch, Wanner (2025)

⁷ Eurostat (2017)

⁸ Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (2012)

⁹ Hatton (2015)

hosting the largest numbers of immigrants. For Canada, we use descriptive statistics provided by various Canadian government sources, most notably Statistics Canada, as well as the OECD.

III Results and Discussion

3.1 The Development of Immigration Policy in Canada

3.1.1 Early Immigration History and Policies

One commonly hears that Canada is the land of immigration, a country with open doors and where all are welcome. In fact, immigration to Canada has been a defining force since the early colonial period. In the 17th and 18th centuries, French and British settlers established the first permanent European settlements, which were followed in the 19th century by waves of Loyalists who came from the United States as well as European farmers. It is only after Confederation in 1867 that the Canadian government began regulating immigration through, for example, the promotion of settlement in Western Canada, thanks to various policies adopted through the years⁽¹⁰⁾. This attracted hundreds of thousands of Europeans to settle in Canada.

It must be noted that early immigration policies were racially selective, with white Europeans being favoured. Canada restricted Chinese, South Asian, and Black immigrants through such measures as the Chinese Head Tax and the exclusion acts⁽¹¹⁾. After World War II, immigration policies were reshaped by humanitarian and economic needs: displaced Europeans, and later refugees from Hungary, Vietnam, and other regions, were accepted to Canada⁽¹²⁾.

In 1967, the introduction of the points system marked a turning point in terms of immigration policy: immigrants were accepted based on several factors, notably education, skills, and language, rather than race and/or nationality⁽¹³⁾. By the 1980s and 1990s, Canada embraced multiculturalism as official policy and saw growing immigration from Asia, Africa and the Caribbean. By 2000, immigration had become central to Canada's identity and played a significant role in its economic development and demographic growth, transitioning from an exclusionary policy to inclusion and diversity.

3.1.2 Immigration Policies 2000–2025

At the beginning of the 21st century, Canada's immigration system underwent significant reform in order to better adapt to labour-market needs, on the one hand, and to respond to humanitarian duties and obligations, on the other. The Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA), adopted in 2002, became the foundational legislation governing immigration, refugees, and citizenship. The three main objectives were economic growth, family reunification, and humanitarian protection.

Immigration Trends

As mentioned, immigration has been the primary driver of Canada's population growth. In 2021, an estimated 23% of the country's population, or 8.3 million people, were immigrants⁽¹⁴⁾. With one of the highest shares of immigrants in the industrialized world, Canada admits anywhere between 200,000 and almost 500,000 permanent residents per year, from a substantial number of countries around the world. Currently, most immigrants hail from Asia and the Middle East, with India, China, and the Philippines topping the list. Although immigrants settle across the country, a sizable portion opt to settle in Canada's larger urban centres such as Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver⁽¹⁵⁾.

As immigration plays a key role in Canada's economic strategy, its points-based system gives priority to applicants whose education, work experience, and language skills (English-French) align with the needs of the labour market, especially in sectors where there are shortages (e.g. skilled trades, health care, technology). Temporary migration has also expanded, although there are concerns with students, workers, and visitors who overstay. The government of Canada estimates that there are currently between 300,000 and 600,000 undocumented residents in the country⁽¹⁶⁾.

Refugee Policy

Since 2000, refugee policy has evolved with the aim of balancing humanitarian commitments with administrative control and public confidence in immigration⁽¹⁷⁾. The goal of the previously mentioned IRPA was, in fact, to codify modern immigration governance to emphasize human rights, address security screening, and manage diversity. The IRPA allowed for two distinct pathways for refugees: a) the resettlement of refugees abroad (Refugee and Humanitarian

¹⁰ Kelley, Reitz and Trebilcock (2025)

¹¹ Knowles (2000)

¹² Banerjee, Alboim, Triandafyllidou and Mathurin (2025)

¹³ Knowles (2000)

¹⁴ Statistics Canada (2022)

¹⁵ Statistics Canada (2022)

¹⁶ Reuters (2023)

¹⁷ Banerjee, Alboim, Triandafyllidou and Mathurin (2025)

Resettlement Program), and b) in-Canada claims for asylum (the In-Canada Asylum Program) for claims made at the border or within Canada. The focus was not so much on the adaptability of refugees, i.e., their ability to settle in quickly, but more on their vulnerability, i.e., the humanitarian need. Also, after 9/11, Canada increased background checks and data sharing with the United States in light of security concerns. In 2004, the Canada-U.S. Safe Third Country Agreement (STCA) was adopted, a policy under which refugee claimants must request protection in the first safe country they enter. Due to the large increase in the number of refugee claimants from 2000 to 2010 and the growing delays and backlogs in processing claims, Bill C-31 (Protecting Canada's Immigration System Act) was introduced to accelerate refugee claim processing, all the while introducing mandatory detention for irregular arrivals lacking identification⁽¹⁸⁾.

Of note is the Private Sponsorship of Refugees (PSR) program, which was expanded in the 2000s, as it allows community groups and faith organizations to sponsor refugees directly. Over 200,000 refugees benefited from this program, making Canada a world leader in this area, a global model. Following the Syrian Civil War (2011-present), over 40,000 Syrian refugees were resettled to Canada through a combination of private and government sponsorships. Canada also saw an increase in inland asylum claims since 2015, with many irregular crossings at the U.S.-Quebec border (Roxham Road) following the tightening of asylum policies in the United States under the Trump administration. Overall, according to Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), Canada accounted for over 10% of global refugee resettlement in 2020.

Provinces and Municipalities

Canadian provinces and municipalities also play a key role in Canada's immigration system. For example, the Provincial Nominee Program (PNP), which was expanded after 2000, allows provinces to nominate immigrants whose skills are tailored to the needs of the local and regional labour markets. This is a way of increasing the immigrant population outside of the major urban centres, which has remained a critical issue. By 2020, over 30% of economic immigrants entered Canada through PNPs⁽¹⁹⁾. Furthermore, some municipalities across the country have partnered with resettlement agencies to facilitate the integration of newcomers.

After 2000, Canada witnessed a significant growth in the number of temporary foreign workers (TFW) and

international students (IS). The goal of the TFW was to expand to address labour shortages in crucial areas such as construction, agriculture, and the service sector at large.

The COVID-19 Pandemic and Subsequent Disruptions

During and after the COVID-19 pandemic (2020 to 2022), Canada witnessed significant disruptions with regard to immigration. These disruptions were in large part due to the tangible effects of the pandemic on border closures, processing delays, and air travel restrictions, causing the numbers to fall sharply in 2020. To compensate, the federal government committed to reversing the trend by adopting a multi-year immigration plan that would allow for over 1.2 million permanent residents to enter Canada between 2021 and 2023. While economic immigration remained a priority, the rationale for the policy change was mostly demographic, due to Canada's low birth rate and aging population, factors that directly affected the country's labour supply, its public finances as well as its ability to innovate in an ever-changing world.

With regards to refugees, there were also major disruptions during the pandemic for the same reasons noted above. However, Canada did, thanks to special measures and pathways, allow for up to 40,000 Afghan refugees during the 2021 Afghanistan crisis. In 2022, the Canada-Ukraine Authorization for Emergency Travel (EUAET) allowed for Ukrainians to come to Canada quickly in response to Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

Current Numbers and Recent Changes in Immigration and Refugee Policy

The data show that from 2000 to 2015, the "total number of immigrants increased at a simple average annual rate of 4% compared to 15% from 2016 to 2024⁽²⁰⁾". The only exception is 2020, due to the pandemic. Here are the number of permanent residents (PR) admitted to Canada from 2019 to 2024⁽²¹⁾:

• 2019	341,180
• 2020	184,600
• 2021	406,055
• 2022	437,630
• 2023	471,820
• 2024	483,640

In October 2024, the Canadian government announced Canada's 2025-2027 Immigration Levels

¹⁸ Library of Parliament (2012)

¹⁹ Finlayson and Globerman (2025)

²⁰ Finlayson and Globerman (2025: i)

²¹ Annual Reports to Parliament on Immigration

Plan, aiming to “pause population growth in the short term to achieve well-managed, sustainable growth in the long term⁽²²⁾.” For the first time, the plan sets controlled targets not only for permanent residents but also for temporary residents, including international students and foreign workers. Although the government admits that immigration has been essential to Canada’s post-pandemic recovery, helping prevent a recession and addressing workforce shortages, it says the transitional plan responds to evolving pressures on housing, infrastructure, and social services while maintaining economic and social prosperity through immigration⁽²³⁾.

Overall, the plan reduces permanent resident targets: 395,000 in 2025, 380,000 in 2026, and 365,000 in 2027. Temporary resident volumes will also decline, with a projected drop of 445,901 in 2025 and 445,662 in 2026. Measures include caps on international students and stricter eligibility for temporary foreign workers, aimed at enhancing program integrity and long-term economic outcomes. The plan prioritizes transitioning established temporary residents to permanent status, representing over 40% of permanent admissions in 2025. Economic-class immigrants will reach 61.7% of total admissions by 2027, supporting key labour sectors such as health and trades. Francophone immigration outside Quebec will also grow, reaching 10% by 2027. Overall, the Levels Plan emphasizes sustainable growth, workforce integration, and social cohesion, ensuring that newcomers can access well-paying jobs, affordable homes, and social services while contributing to Canada’s economic and social prosperity⁽²⁴⁾.

3.2 The Development of Asylum Policy in Europe

The recent “asylum crisis” is essentially a crisis of EU asylum policy, placing disproportionate pressure on a limited number of Member States, particularly those located on the EU’s external borders. At the same time, the migration policy has exposed big differences among Member States with respect to European solidarity. Another damaging consequence of the migration crisis could be its impact on trade and economic growth⁽²⁵⁾. For this reason, the EU has undertaken “reforms of asylum policy.”⁽²⁶⁾ Asylum is both a fundamental right and an international obligation of states, as recognized in the 1951 Geneva Convention on the Status

of Refugees⁽²⁷⁾. EU Member States share a collective responsibility to ensure the dignified reception of asylum applicants, to guarantee fair treatment, and to assess their cases according to common standards. Procedures must be fair, efficient, and resistant to abuse.

The Pact on Migration and Asylum⁽²⁸⁾ is a package of new rules for managing migration and establishing a common EU asylum system. It is designed to deliver results while remaining firmly rooted in European values. Building on earlier reform proposals in the field of migration, the Pact transforms them into a comprehensive approach that strengthens and integrates key EU policies on migration, asylum, border management, and integration. With firm but fair rules, it aims to provide long-term governance and normalization of migration, while granting Member States the flexibility to address specific challenges and ensuring essential safeguards for the protection of people in need.

Following its adoption by the European Parliament and the Council, the new rules introduced under the Pact entered into force on 11 June 2024 and will begin to apply after a two-year transition period. This ensures that the Union will have strong and secure external borders, that individual rights will be guaranteed, and that no EU Member State will be left to face migratory pressures alone.

The successful adoption of this reform reflects the EU’s and its Member States’ collective commitment to finding solutions to shared challenges through enhanced mutual trust, while ensuring a common approach to asylum and migration across all EU countries. Establishing a harmonized approach to asylum applications guarantees that, regardless of where an application is lodged, the outcome will be comparable, and the same rights and obligations will apply throughout the Union.

3.2.1 The Development of EU Asylum Legislation in the 21st Century

EU cooperation on asylum matters has led to a progressive rise in the legal standards applicable to asylum seekers and refugees. This development can largely be explained by broader institutional changes that have gradually shaped the EU “system of venues,” thereby reducing the likelihood of more restrictive measures being adopted within the EU asylum policy framework.⁽²⁹⁾

²² IRCC (2024a)

²³ IRCC (2024a)

²⁴ IRCC (2024a)

²⁵ Buonanno (2017)

²⁶ Carmen González Enríquez (2024)

²⁷ Convention relating to the Status of Refugees (1951)

²⁸ Pact on Migration and Asylum n.d.b. (2024)

²⁹ Kaunert and Léonard (2012).

3.2.2 Phase 1999–2005

In 1999, the European Council committed itself to working towards the establishment of a Common European Asylum System (CEAS), based on the full and inclusive application of the Geneva Convention. The commitments adopted under the Tampere Programme marked the beginning of CEAS and resulted in the adoption of several EU legislative instruments.

Between 1999 and 2005, six legal acts were adopted setting out minimum standards for asylum:

- the Eurodac Regulation (establishing a fingerprint database for asylum applicants),
- the Temporary Protection Directive,
- the Reception Conditions Directive,
- the Dublin II Regulation (replacing the 1990 Dublin Convention),
- the Qualification Directive,
- the Asylum Procedures Directive.

3.2.3 Phase 2008–2013

Following the completion of the first phase, a period of reflection was required to determine the future direction of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS). The situation across EU Member States remained highly divergent, and levels of protection were still insufficiently robust. This led to the presentation of the European Commission's Policy Plan on Asylum in June 2008, which laid the foundation for the development of common and uniform protection standards.

For a long time, the allocation of responsibilities for asylum seekers among EU Member States has been a major point of contention in the functioning of CEAS. The inequitable responsibility-sharing rules under the Dublin system and the lack of compliance with them undermined trust between Member States⁽³⁰⁾.

Alongside the Policy Plan, the Commission presented a package of recast asylum laws, which was completed in 2013. Among the innovations was the establishment of the European Asylum Support Office (EASO), intended to assist Member States in the implementation of EU asylum law and to strengthen practical cooperation.

3.2.4 Phase 2015–2023

In 2015, the unprecedented number of refugee and irregular migrant arrivals in the EU exposed a series of shortcomings and gaps in the Union's asylum policies. In May and July 2016, the European Commission proposed a third package of seven legislative acts

aimed at moving towards a fully effective and fair asylum policy capable of addressing situations of high migratory pressure.

In 2017, the European Parliament and the Council reached broad political agreement on five of the seven proposals, including: the establishment of a fully-fledged European Union Agency for Asylum, the reform of the Eurodac system, the revision of the Reception Conditions Directive, the Qualification Regulation, and the establishment of an EU Resettlement Framework. However, the Council failed to reach a common position on proposals concerning the reform of the Dublin system and the Asylum Procedures Regulation.

In September 2020, the Commission presented a Communication and a revised package of nine instruments, covering all the elements required for a comprehensive European approach to migration. After extensive negotiations between the Council and the European Parliament, agreement was reached in December 2022 on three legislative texts of the Pact, followed in December 2023 by consensus on the key political elements of five core regulations of the Pact.

3.2.5 Phase 2024 – Present

The development of the EU's migration and asylum framework has unfolded gradually alongside broader European integration. Over time, migration governance shifted from primarily national control to a more coordinated system shaped by shared rules and institutions. Efforts to harmonize procedures, clarify state responsibilities, and strengthen external border management have expanded steadily, reflecting both security concerns and the need for coherent policies within an area without internal borders. As EU competences in this field have grown, specialized mechanisms and agencies for managing migration and border control have become increasingly central to the Union's approach.⁽³¹⁾

On 10 April 2024, the European Parliament adopted ten legislative texts forming the Pact on Migration and Asylum. The Council followed suit on 14 May 2024. After their publication in the Official Journal on 22 May 2024, the Pact entered into force on 12 June 2024. A two-year transitional period applies between the entry into force of the Pact and its date of application in mid-2026.

The Regulation on Asylum and Migration Management (RAMM) establishes that EU countries facing migratory pressure will be assisted by other Member States either through the relocation of asylum applicants to their territory, financial contributions, or operational and technical support. At the same time, the Dublin rules are updated, i.e., the criteria for

³⁰ De Bruycker (2024)

³¹ Spehar (2025)

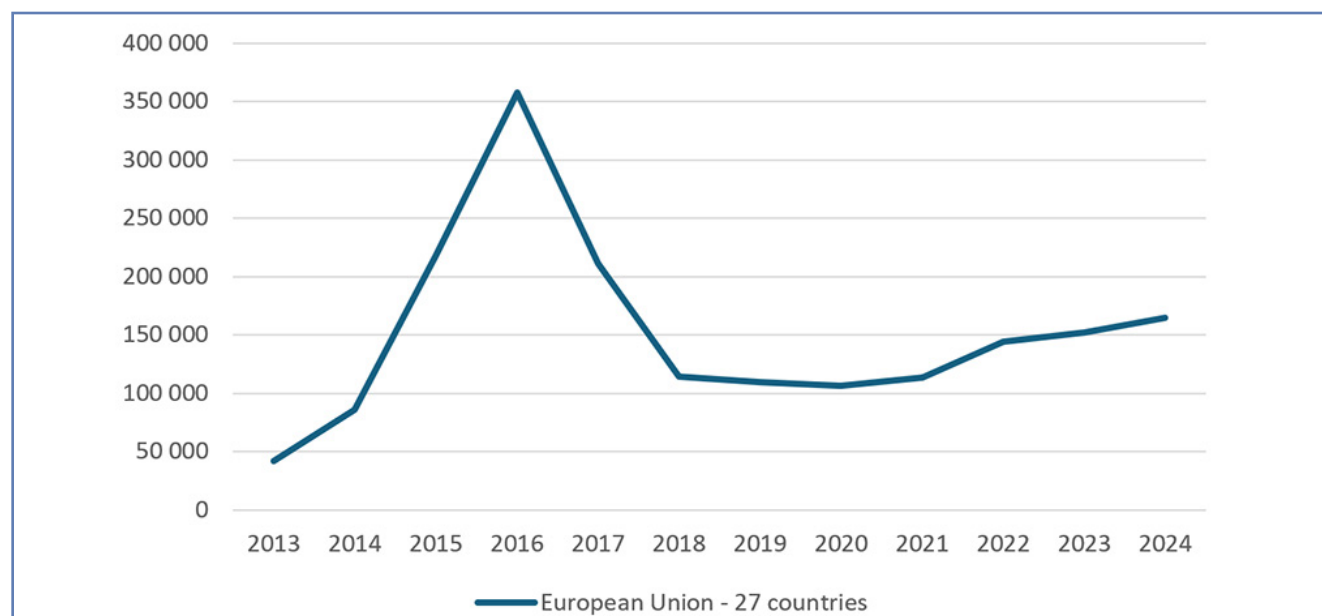


Figure 1 Eurostat data on First-time asylum applicants – per thousand persons from 2013–2024
Source: Eurostat, 2025

determining which Member State is responsible for examining applications for international protection.

In line with the requirements of the new legislation, the Commission published in June 2024 a Joint Implementation Plan, which serves as the basis for the preparation of national implementation plans. These plans are intended to ensure that Member States have well-prepared systems in place and are able to apply the Pact on Migration and Asylum by mid-2026.

On 10 April 2024, the European Parliament approved a new EU asylum and migration policy based on the principle of solidarity and the fair sharing of responsibility. New Pact on Migration and Asylum (2024)⁽³²⁾ will be in force from June 2026. The Pact is not a single law but a package of Regulations, adopted in April 2024. The key instruments that will replace or update the current framework include:

1. Regulation on Asylum and Migration Management (RAMM) – replaces Dublin III. While maintaining the rules on determining the responsible Member State, it introduces a mandatory solidarity mechanism (relocation, financial contributions, or operational support).
2. Asylum Procedures Regulation (APR) – replaces the Asylum Procedures Directive (2013/32/EU), harmonises asylum procedures across the EU, and makes border procedures obligatory for certain categories of applicants.

According to the agreed legislation, all Member States will be required to contribute to supporting those

EU countries recognized as being under migratory pressure (“beneficiary Member States”), i.e. where the scale of arrivals of applicants is such that it creates disproportionate obligations compared to the overall situation in the Union and necessitates immediate solidarity action.

3.2.6 Relocations and/or Financial Contributions

A solidarity pool will be established each year, to which all EU countries must contribute either through relocations (i.e., the transfer of an applicant or a beneficiary of international protection from the territory of the Member State granting protection to the territory of a beneficiary Member State) or through financial contributions. The calculation of each Member State’s contribution will be based on its population size (50%) and GDP (50%), while each country remains free to choose the type of contribution⁽³³⁾.

Member States declared to be under migratory pressure shall notify the Council and the Commission of their intention to draw upon the solidarity pool and may request a partial or full deduction of their own solidarity contributions.

The new regulation sets a minimum threshold of 30,000 relocations and €600 million in financial contributions. In the event of insufficient pledges for relocations, a Member State with persons eligible for transfer under the responsibility criteria may be required to assume responsibility for examining applications for

³² Pact on Migration and Asylum, n.d.a. (2024)

³³ De Bruycker (2024)

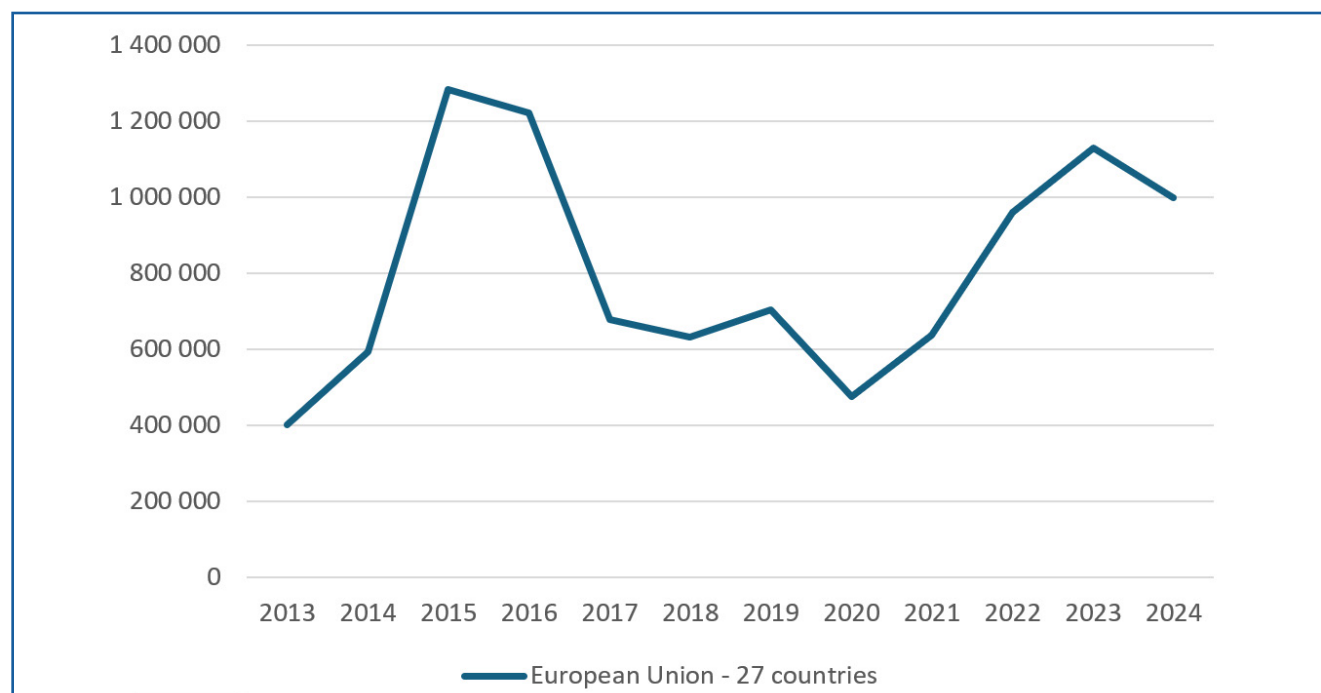


Figure 2 Total number of asylum seekers in EU through 2013–2024
Source: Eurostat, 2025

international protection, if the responsible Member State is a beneficiary Member State, instead of contributing through relocations.

The right to apply for international protection does not include the possibility for the applicant to choose which Member State will be responsible for examining the application or to which Member State he or she will be relocated⁽³⁴⁾.

The granting of asylum by EU Member States to asylum applicants from third countries has shown a steady annual increase since 2013, which peaked in 2016, then plunged to 100,000 people. Subsequently, the trend stagnated up to 2021, afterwards it picked up again, and nowadays the EU experiences a steady increase in asylum applications.

Over the reference period 2013–2024 (First instance decisions on asylum applications by type of decision, Eurostat 2025)⁽³⁵⁾, in 2024, EU countries granted asylum to 164,820 applicants, compared with 42,145 applicants in 2013. The geometric mean annual growth rate (CAGR) is approximately 13.3% per year.

Comprehensive data on the total number of asylum applicants in the EU are available from 2014 onwards. In addition to asylum seekers, EU Member States have also issued decisions granting temporary protection. Aggregate data on temporary protection are available for the period 2020–2024. While the absolute number

of refugees granted international protection is high, when measured per thousand persons in individual EU Member States, the data show a generally rising trend in the number of persons benefiting from international protection⁽³⁶⁾.

3.3 Integration of Migrants in Canada

3.3.1 Social Integration of Migrants in Canada (2000–2025)

As we have mentioned, immigrants now represent a much larger share of Canada's population than in 2000; by 2021, about 23% of the population were immigrants, and recent arrivals accounted for much of the growth⁽³⁷⁾. It will continue to rise in the years to come. Canada's points-based and economic selection systems have increased the share of highly educated newcomers, which raised overall educational attainment but also created skill-mismatch issues. In fact, many skilled immigrants face delayed employment, credential-recognition barriers, and underemployment (i.e. working below their qualification level). While outcomes do improve over time, with the second generation doing better than the first, persistent wage and employment gaps remain for some groups⁽³⁸⁾.

³⁴ Pact on Migration and Asylum, n.d.b. (2024)

³⁵ EUROSTAT, n.d., a. (2025)

³⁶ EUROSTAT, n.d.c. (2025)

³⁷ Statistics Canada (2022)

³⁸ OECD/EU (2023)

Newcomers are increasingly settling outside major urban area, producing mixed integration outcomes that depend heavily on local labour market demand, settlement services, and community networks. Integration, in general, is measured across three domains: labour/skills, living conditions, and civic engagement/social inclusion⁽³⁹⁾. Sense of belonging, participation in civic life and settlement support networks vary significantly by region of origin, length of stay and host-community context. Current challenges for newcomers include discrimination, as well as language barriers (English-French)⁽⁴⁰⁾.

3.3.2 Recent Changes in Public Opinion on Immigration

The Environics Institute's Canadian Public Opinion about Immigration and Refugees, published in 2025, captures shifting Canadian public opinion on immigration and refugees amid a turbulent global and domestic context. The report situates its findings within a politically charged year marked by Donald Trump's return to the U.S. presidency, a new Canadian Liberal government, and heightened anxiety over economic stability and sovereignty.

Canadians remain divided on immigration, with a majority believing levels are too high. The federal government's 2024 decision to reduce immigration targets and include temporary residents has not fully restored public confidence. Concerns increasingly center on perceived mismanagement rather than immigration itself.

A majority of Canadians continue to say there is too much immigration, but opinions have stabilized since 2024 following a sharp increase over the two previous years. Those who express this view increasingly point to poor government management as the problem⁽⁴¹⁾.

Currently, 56 percent of Canadians say immigration levels are excessive, a figure slightly lower than 2024 but much higher than early 2020s levels. Perceived mismanagement by the government is now cited more often than cultural or economic concerns.

An increasing number of Canadians express concerns about the legitimacy of some refugees and how newcomers are integrating into society. A significant minority continues to agree that immigrants lead to more crime and that the country admits too many racial minorities⁽⁴²⁾.

While skepticism toward refugee legitimacy and cultural integration is rising, most Canadians still

acknowledge immigration's economic and social benefits.

Public concerns about newcomers notwithstanding, Canadians continue to recognize the positive contribution of immigration to the national economy and their local communities. Eight in ten believe people born abroad are as likely as native-born Canadians to be good citizens⁽⁴³⁾.

The report highlights a widening partisan divide, especially between Conservative and Liberal/NDP supporters, making immigration one of the most polarized and defining issues in Canadian politics today.

3.4 Integration of Migrants into European Societies

Research increasingly emphasizes the importance of local public administrations in managing migration and diversity. Effective responses require well-prepared and competent local authorities capable of handling migration pressures and supporting integration. Since local officials interact with migrants daily, their attitudes and skills significantly shape the overall integration environment. However, studies show that local public administrators in several countries often hold cautious or negative views toward migrants and lack adequate training, which can hinder their performance and the quality of services they provide⁽⁴⁴⁾.

As of February 2024, over 4,000 asylum seekers had been relocated across EU countries under the Voluntary Solidarity Mechanism, targeting arrivals in front-line states like Cyprus, Greece, Malta, Italy, and Spain⁽⁴⁵⁾.

Demographics will be an increasingly significant factor in European debates about both asylum and immigration policy. With the population declining in many EU Member States, and the ratio of working-age to older populations becoming unsustainable, the EU will require continued inward migration flows. Migrants could represent a partial solution to Europe's demographic crisis in certain regions, cities, or municipalities. However, the EU and its Member States clearly face enormous challenges in integrating migrants, many of whom are Muslims⁽⁴⁶⁾.

A persistent challenge remains the integration of refugees, who should ideally be integrated rapidly into society. In practice, this approach often fails, and parts of host societies continue to pursue structural or institutional forms of selective policies toward migrants. This means that although naturalized migrants

³⁹ OECD/EU (2023)

⁴⁰ IRCC (2024b)

⁴¹ Environics Institute (2024: 1)

⁴² Environics Institute (2024: 1)

⁴³ Environics Institute (2024: 2)

⁴⁴ Malatinec, Urbančíková, Hudec (2020)

⁴⁵ European Commission (2024)

⁴⁶ Buonanno (2017)

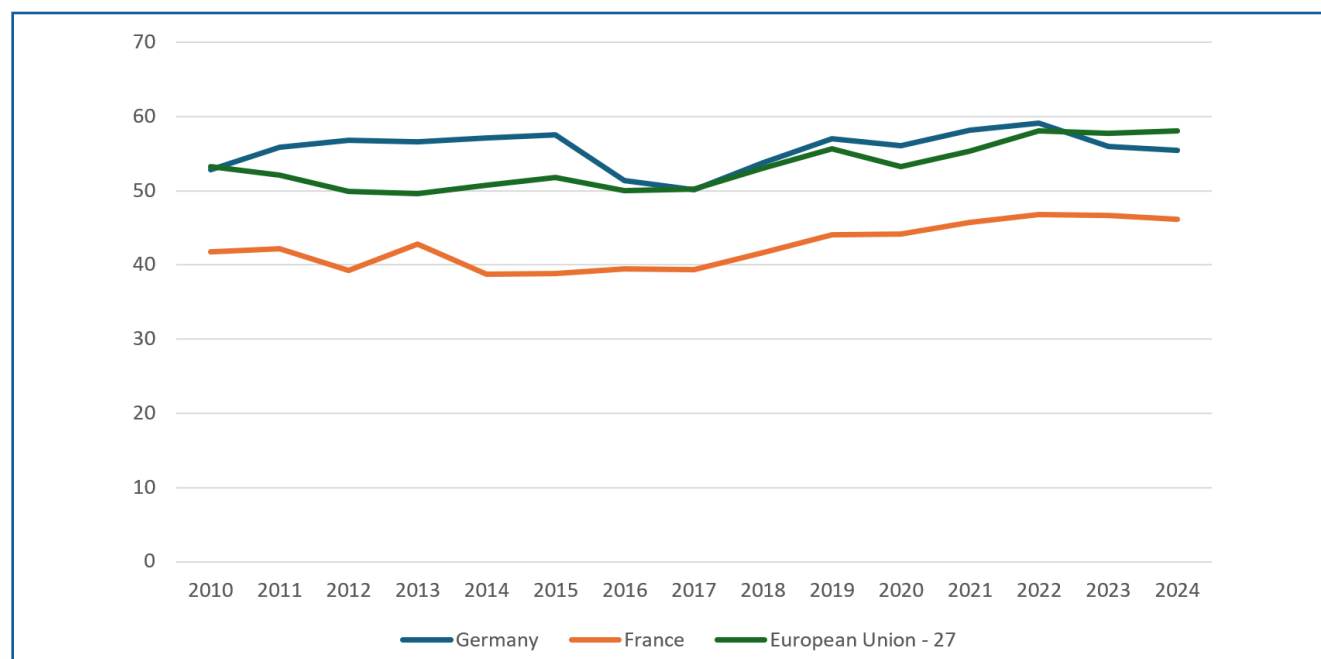


Figure 3 Employment rates (per cent share) among recent immigrants, comparing EU, France and Germany, through 2010–2024
Source: Eurostat, 2025

may formally enjoy full civic rights, these rights are frequently restricted in practice⁽⁴⁷⁾.

Recent work suggests that local governments often continue to rely on established integration practices rather than fully transitioning to broad diversity-oriented policies. In many places, long-standing approaches to coexistence, conflict resolution, and community engagement remain central, even as socio-economic pressures and political dynamics shape how migration is addressed. While some local administrations have adopted more comprehensive, rights-based frameworks that view migration as part of wider societal diversity, others remain influenced by challenging social conditions and shifting political attitudes⁽⁴⁸⁾.

Germany and France are the two EU countries hosting the largest numbers of immigrants, and the employment rates of immigrants in these EU countries, compared with the EU⁽⁴⁹⁾, are shown in Figure 3.

The new solidarity mechanism is intended to help address these challenges: EU Member States under migratory pressure will be supported by others either through the relocation of asylum applicants to their territory, financial contributions, or operational and technical assistance.

IV Conclusion

The social environment in Canada and Europe in the twenty-first century has been significantly shaped by migration flows and the political responses to them. Canada has long positioned itself as a country of immigration, emphasizing managed and selective migration aimed at supporting economic growth and strengthening a multicultural society. By contrast, the European Union faces complex challenges arising from irregular and forced migration, which have led to the adoption of reform measures, including the Pact on Migration and Asylum (2024).

A comparison of these two approaches highlights their differing priorities: while Canada focuses on the long-term integration of migrants and their planned contribution to the labour market, the EU seeks to reconcile solidarity and responsibility among its Member States, responding to crises and public opinion pressures. The analysis underscores that an effective migration policy is inseparably linked to social stability, demographic trends, and the capacity to ensure the inclusion of migrants within host societies.

While Canada and the European Union share a commitment to the principles of the 1951 Geneva Convention and to the protection of refugees, their migration and asylum systems differ significantly in design, governance, and long-term objectives. Canada's approach is fundamentally nation-state driven, centralized, and explicitly oriented toward planned, long-term demographic and economic

⁴⁷ Žac (2021)

⁴⁸ Falguera et al. (2024)

⁴⁹ EUROSTAT, n.d., d. (2025)

strategies. Its points-based economic immigration system, long-standing emphasis on permanent residency, and reliance on structured pathways such as the Provincial Nominee Programs reflect a model in which migration is treated as an instrument of economic development and population renewal. Humanitarian protection is managed through two coherent streams, overseas resettlement and inland asylum, with Canada playing a leading international role in refugee resettlement, notably through private sponsorship programs.

In contrast, the European Union faces the challenge of coordinating 27 migration and asylum systems, each shaped by distinct political priorities, administrative capacities, and public attitudes. EU policy must reconcile external border pressures, uneven responsibility-sharing, and divergent national interests, leading to periodic crises and slow institutional reform. The Pact on Migration and Asylum (2024) represents a major step toward harmonization, but the EU's governance structure continues to rely on difficult negotiations between Member States and on balancing solidarity with sovereignty.

These structural differences explain why Canada has generally maintained a more stable and predictable migration system, even amid political tensions, while the EU continues to confront cyclical pressures linked to irregular arrivals, external border management, and the absence of a fully unified asylum system. Ultimately, Canada's model is characterized by proactive selection and integration planning, whereas the EU's is defined by reactive crisis management, shared governance, and complex negotiations among Member States. Together, these contrasting experiences show that effective migration policy depends not only on legislation but on institutional capacity, political cohesion, and societal consensus.

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