

Paperless Workshop

Introduction to the topic by Alex Rosen

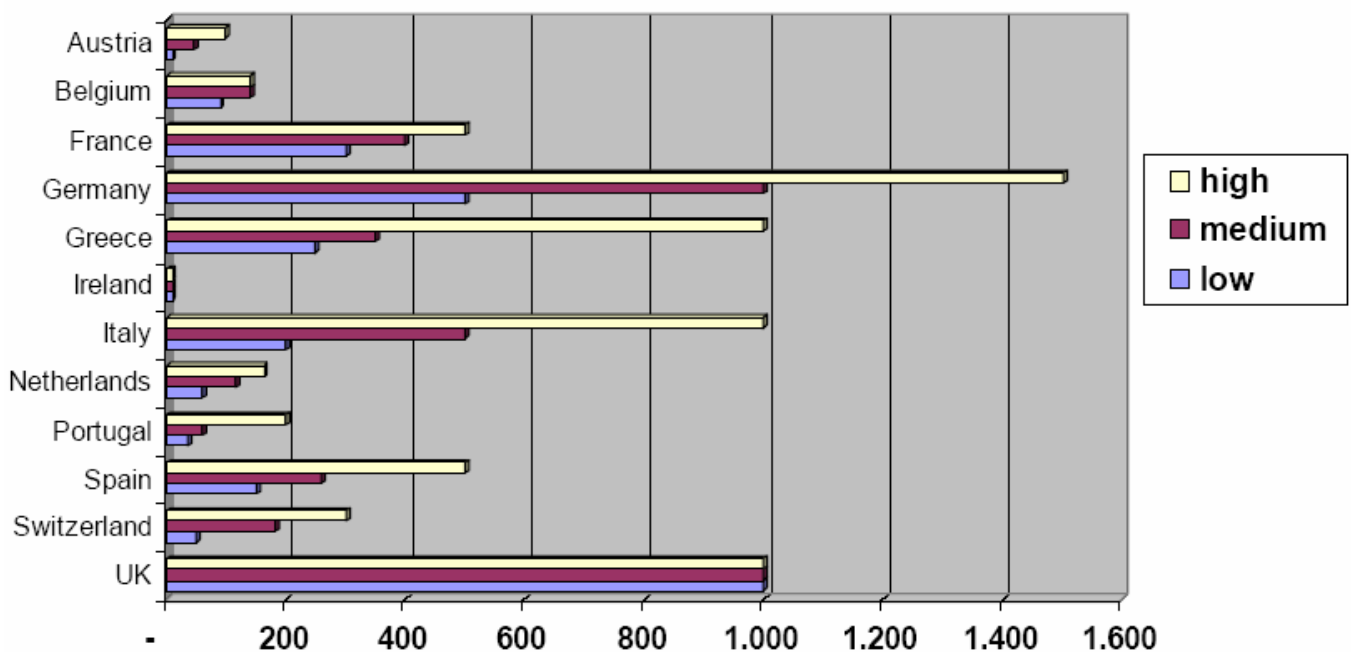
What are we talking about?

“Illegal immigration”

Paperless people

International Center for Migration Policy Development → we don't know how many

Estimates of stocks of illegal migrants in 12 European countries (in 1,000)



Why are we talking about it?

Medical students → doctors → responsibility to care

→ situation to deal with this

→ possibilities to change something

Who are we talking about?

Small groups work on their cases and present them

People present their experiences

Possible projects are discussed

Paperless People in Europe - Background information

Today there are about 3 - 4,5 million people living within the European Union without any legal papers. In other countries where, not so long ago, living without a passport did not mean the lack of all rights, it is becoming much harder to survive without any legal documents. In Great Britain, for example, undocumented migrants and refugees were once entitled to welfare payments. In the Netherlands, in France or Southern European countries, registration systems used to be rather slack, so that people without any papers also had access to the (legal) job and housing markets and to the public health and education systems. A lot of people who have lived in Europe for decades (and some even all their lives) are being forced into the status of pariahs. Refugees and migrants trying to enter a country of the European Union today are more or less forced to cross the borders "illegally", due to stricter visa requirements, the restriction of family reunions, and the so-called "safe country regulation". Some of the refugees and migrants are able to apply for political asylum and so receive at least a restricted residence permit. But since the number of accepted political refugees is constantly dropping (in Germany the acceptance rate lies at 5%), most of them are forced to leave the country or go underground after a short period of time. All in all, the chances of receiving a permanent residence permit are declining all over Europe. Due to that fact, more and more of the newly arriving migrants have to find ways of staying undocumented without any false or borrowed papers.

The lack of rights and the general situation without papers is a rather difficult one, especially for women and families with children. But for an increasing number of people it is the only alternative to deportation and a life of misery in their home countries. Illegal migrants and refugees are not a homogeneous group. They have one thing in common: no papers and no rights. Apart from that, there are thousands of different stories, experiences and backgrounds leading to a life of "illegality" in one of the European countries. While, in Great Britain or France, migration is closely connected to the history of colonialism, Germany after the Second World War developed a system of recruitment of so-called guest workers. Linked to that are different systems of naturalization and citizenship, in Germany for example the predominance of the "jus sanguinis" until today. Amnesty campaigns for undocumented migrants in France, Italy, Portugal or Sweden in recent years, as well as different ways of dealing with deportation, show that there is still some "scope for action in the nation states". Due to the variety of national practices the conditions of illegal migrants for surviving and fighting back differ from one country to the next. It would go into too much detail to outline the restrictions and problems of each country, but a brief overview of attempts to legalize paperless people or ease their burden will be attempted here:

Italy

Amnesty for "clandestini" was granted in 1982, 1986, 1990 and 1998 if they were able to show a working contract for the following six months. However, at the same time, the restrictions for illegal immigration were increased and humanitarian help reduced. A public health insurance card (STP – Straniero – Temporamente – Presente) gives paperless people access to the health care system

Spain

Immigrants "sin papeles" were able, in 1985, to apply for permanent residence if they lived in Spain for more than 5 years or could provide a working contract or realistic proposal for future work. In 1999, the law was refined and immigrants were able to apply for a working permit "sin papeles" if they had been in Spain for more than 2 years. They were also granted voting rights, the right to education, social security, health care and movement.

France

In 1982, 130.000 people were legalized and in 1997 a second legalization campaign was undertaken, which applied to people living in the country for more than 7 years or were married to a French citizen. The "sans papiers" have their own organization, which is trying to fight for more civil rights and legalization opportunities. The immigration census in France shows that some 200,000 undocumented immigrants are living in the country, coming especially from Africa, North Africa and China.

Germany

While there were 400.000 applications for political asylum in the beginning of the 1990's, this number declined to 75.000 in 2002, 50.000 in 2003 and to below 30.000 this year – around 5 applications per 10.000 inhabitants. In countries like Austria or Scandinavia, this ratio is much higher, with around 40 applications per 10.000 inhabitants. Only 5% of these are accepted. This has caused a great movement into hiding and "illegality". There are between 500.000 and around 1.5 million "Papierlose" living in Europe. There have been no legalization campaigns, there is no access to education for children, no access to the public health system.

"You shall know that no one is illegal. It is a contradiction in itself.
People can be beautiful or even more beautiful. They may be just or unjust.
But illegal? How can someone be illegal?"

Elie Wiesel, Nobel Peace Laureate and Holocaust survivor