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ECONOMIC RESTRUCTURING AND MIGRATION ASSIMILATION IN THE EU: THE ROLE OF DIVERSE ECONOMIC MODELS

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ABSTRACT

The European Union (EU) is made up of several economic systems, each affecting migration policies and integration processes uniquely. Though some economies value welfare protections and social stability, others focus on market liberalisation and labour flexibility. Especially in the context of post-crisis economic reorganization, this research examines the effects of mixed economic, social market, and neoliberal policies on migrant integration.

The study uses qualitative comparative analysis to investigate information mainly from Eurostat and policy reports of 2007-2023. Classified into three economic models (neoliberal, social market, and mixed), the study evaluates how institutional support, social expenditure, and labour market structures help to define migrant inclusion among member states of the EU. The results point to major variations in migrant employment stability, access to social benefits, and possibilities for long-term integration across various economic systems.

The outcomes imply that social market economies (e.g., Germany, Sweden, France) have the most complete support systems, therefore resulting in better long-term integration rates even in the face of initial labour market rigidities and significant financial costs. Quick access to work but at the expense of unstable employment and scant social protection characterizes neoliberal economies, which sometimes keep immigrants stuck in low-wage, unstable jobs (e.g., Estonia, Ireland, pre-Brexit UK). Mixed economies (e.g., Greece, Poland, Italy) suffer from erratic policies and financial limitations, hence high employment disparities and ongoing migratory poverty levels.

The research emphasizes from a policy point of view the need for varied EU policies that match the structural facts of every economic model. One should consider the role of public debt in funding integration programs, strengthening welfare mechanisms in mixed economies, and incorporating migration metrics into national budget development. Given the changing demographics and economic currents in the EU, a flexible but coordinated strategy is vital to negotiate sustainable social inclusion with economic development.

Keywords: economic models, migration policies, social market economy, neoliberal economy, mixed economy, integration strategies, EU migration trends, policy effectiveness

JEL Classification: F22, O52, J61, H55

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INTRODUCTION

Rising interest in the European Union's (EU) economic change is propelled by the sophisticated interaction of financial, social, and demographic issues. Rather than a single entity, the European Union is made up of several different financial systems reflecting various institutional frameworks and policy orientations (Mitchell, 2016). The EU encompasses a variety of trajectories and influences strategies that reflect a diverse range of approaches towards governance and market regulation (Robertson, 2008; Bongardt & Torres, 2021). This division is important for assessing post-crisis restructuring and the large-scale migration inflows over the past decade. While some may perceive these models as unified or monolithic, the reality is that they incorporate elements of neoliberalism, social market economies, and mixed economies (Tribe, 2007; Avagianou et al., 2022).

Each of these models offers distinct philosophical foundations and practical implications for how economic policies are formulated and implemented across member states generating varying degrees of resilience and inclusivity (Fabbrini, 2021; McNamara, 2023).

Understanding how economic systems react to migration pressures and disasters calls for a comparative study of these models, which provides clues on institutional adaptability and policy effectiveness. The organization of EU member states into neoliberal, social market, and mixed economies presents a useful structure for evaluating migration integration policies and post-crisis recovery initiatives. This classification allows for a systematic investigation of how various economic circumstances affect a country's capacity to handle complicated social and economic issues including labour market integration and social security for immigrants apart from reflecting the institutional and policy diversity across the European Union (Collinson, 2009).

For instance, Market autonomy, privatization, and little public spending are especially stressed in neoliberal economies including those in the Baltic states and Ireland (Cerny et al., 2005) — these features can expedite economic adjustment but often leave limited room for robust social safety nets (Robertson, 2008; Bongardt & Torres, 2021). By comparison, countries within social market traditions emphasize a fusion of welfare interventions and market participation, facilitating comprehensive social programs at the expense of heavier fiscal burdens (Giubboni, 2006). Meanwhile, mixed economies, common in Southern and Central-Eastern Europe, combine elements of both approaches and exhibit uneven institutional capacities to meet the demands of post-crisis recovery (Fabbrini, 2021).

Knowing these differences is important not only for an intellectual viewpoint but also for politicians looking for fair and efficient answers. Further study could offer precise policy ideas based on whether states with different economic systems have effectively integrated or struggled with migrant populations, therefore balancing short-term financial constraints without fracturing long-term social harmony. Theoretical foundations of neoliberal, social market, and mixed models are therefore investigated in this essay, their different policy mechanisms are analysed, and their influence on economic restructuring and migrant integration results in the EU is assessed.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Europe's economic models—neoliberal, social market, mixed systems—offer different methods of balancing market forces, government intervention, and social protection. These models, according to Hermann (2014) and Bongardt and Torres (2007), show historical, cultural, and institutional variations among member states that greatly affect their economic administration. As Stockhammer (2013) and Mulvey and Davidson (2018) explain, neoliberalism places little emphasis on government regulation, deregulation, and market efficiency, occasionally forsaking social equity. Adăscăliței and Heyes (2021) emphasize the increasing liberalization and deregulation of labour markets in Europe, a trend particularly evident in neoliberal economies. By contrast, the social market model stresses a middle ground between free-market ideas and strong welfare systems, therefore advancing social justice along with economic development (Schwarz et al., 1989; Craig Lefebvre, 2013; Sainsbury, 2013; Mehmet, 2014; Schlösser et al., 2017). Prevalent in Southern and Central-Eastern Europe, mixed economies are transitional systems that combine features of corporatism, statism, and local family welfare customs (Costa-Font, 2012; Żuk & Savelin, 2018; Szelényi & Mihályi, 2020). Hajighasemi (2019) underscores the adaptive strategies of European welfare states amid globalization and economic restructuring, noting that these systems must balance external economic pressures with internal social cohesion.

In modern literature, the link between migration and economic theories has been thoroughly investigated. Avagianou et al. (2022), regarding migrant integration, highlight the part of social policies in assisting or impeding says that social market economies offer superior inclusive paths than their mixed and neoliberal counterparts. Škuflić, Krpan, and Žmuk (2018) employ cluster analysis to explore the relationship between migration and economic performance across EU member states, revealing significant disparities driven by economic models and institutional capacities. According to Fuchs (2016) and Juska (2024), neoliberal models give labour market flexibility a first priority, therefore migrants can find work fast but typically at the cost of long-term social integration. By contrast, social market economies with their extensive welfare systems provide organized integration plans but struggle with labour market inflexibility (Edling et al., 2014). As Hill (2019) and Costa-Font (2012) observed, mixed economies do not have the institutional capacity to seamlessly incorporate immigrants, so rates of social exclusion are higher.

The political argument about these models is anything but theoretical. Dealing with unprecedented refugee inflows, many EU member nations faced the 2008 financial meltdown and the following sovereign debt crisis together with austerity, rising unemployment, and social unrest (Myant, 2021). The outcome has been a constant conflict between social defences meant to protect the most underprivileged people and market-based reforms meant to raise competitiveness and lower government debt. Particularly apparent in the field of migrant assimilation — the subject of which labour market conditions, social expenditures, and administrative systems must all coincide to guarantee both economic dynamism and social cohesion (McNamara, 2023) — this tension is prominent.

Recent studies indicate that an overreliance on any one approach — be it statelet redistribution or market-driven liberalization — might worsen inequality and compromise long-term stability (Robertson, 2008; Avagianou et al., 2022). Research of Northern and Western Europe, for example, correlates strong welfare support with better migrant labour market results; in more market-driven economies, migrants might find quick employment but frequently lack a way for upward mobility (Bongardt & Torres, 2021; Fabbrini, 2021). According to an increasing quantity of literature, structural distinctions in tax, labour negotiations, and social insurance policies result (Tribe, 2007; Mitchell, 2016).

Not only do economic models define work market possibilities, but they also define the social safety nets migrants depend on upon migrating to another nation. Similarly, the different institutions of neoliberal, social market, and mixed economies result in significantly different levels of integration. Whereas some academics point to the possible advantages of instant access to employment and market-driven changes, others highlight the great social costs that come with poor welfare systems or uncertain financial capacity. Below are subsections that delve into important aspects of every model as regards migrant integration, using recent studies to show how governmental structures interact with labour demand, state spending, and policy coherence.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of this paper is to examine how different economic models in the European Union (EU) impact migrant integration during post-crisis restructuring. The primary objectives include:

1. Identifying how institutional structures affect both short and long-term consequences, thereby evaluating the impact of different European economic models on migration integration under changing economic circumstances.
2. Determining the key factors that support or hinder social adaptation among migrant communities.
3. Identifying the most effective national approaches within the EU context, pinpointing which countries have successfully navigated integration challenges by balancing economic performance and inclusive governance.

By addressing these objectives, this study contributes to the ongoing discourse on EU labour-market dynamics, welfare state resilience, and migration policy adaptation, offering evidence-based recommendations for policymakers navigating the challenges of post-crisis restructuring and migrant integration.

METHODS

This study employs a comparative economic analysis to examine how different EU economic models (Neoliberal, Social Market, and Mixed economies) shape migrant integration outcomes during post-crisis restructuring. The methodology is structured to classify countries into economic models, analyse policy frameworks, and assess labour-market participation, social protection, and institutional support for migrants across these categories.

The study relies on secondary data from Eurostat, UK government data repositories, Existing literature and policy reports.

The analysis focuses on the period 2007–2023, covering key economic and social shifts, including:

1. The 2008 financial crisis and its impact on labour markets.
2. The European migration crisis (2015–2016) and policy responses.
3. The COVID-19 pandemic (2020–2022) and its effect on labour-market participation and welfare dependency.
4. The Ukrainian migration crisis is not included due to limited official data and current changes.

EU member states are categorized into three primary economic models, based on their structural characteristics:

1. Neoliberal economies – prioritizing labour-market flexibility, privatization, and low social spending.

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2. Social Market economies – characterized by strong welfare states, collective bargaining, and labour protections.
3. Mixed economies – combining elements of neoliberal and social market systems, often facing policy inconsistencies and fiscal instability.

The research uses a systematic qualitative analysis informed by the Comparative Policy Review to dig into how migrant employment results vary across the three economic models depending upon labour regulations, welfare benefits, and financial policies; a theoretical interpretation of economic models and their influence on migration policies based on Conceptual Frameworks from Existing Literature; and Case Studies and Empirical Observations to draw from earlier studies and national reports to provide real-world applications of economic models in migration integration.

This study determines the structural benefits and drawbacks of each economic model in promoting migrant labour-market integration and social inclusion by methodically examining these variables. The results support policy debates about how to maximise labour-market tactics while preserving the EU's social stability and economic competitiveness.

RESULTS

This work analyses three major economic systems—Neoliberal, Social Market, and Mixture—in terms of idea and range and assesses their different approaches to migration assimilation based on existing structures. Although academic writing regularly points out their defining characteristics, real policies vary depending on historical, cultural, and political heritage. Any comparison study must therefore first establish the theoretical foundation of these models. Given in Table 1 is a concise overview of how different writers define Neoliberal, Social Market, and Mixed systems, with major policy emphasis, theoretical basis, and observed effects for migrant integration noted.

Table 1. Conceptual Definitions of Economic Models from Select Authors.

Economic Model	Conceptual Focus	Representative Authors / Works	Implications for Migration Assimilation
Neoliberal	Emphasis on market autonomy, privatization, and minimal social intervention.	Stockhammer (2013); Mulvey & Davidson (2018); Fuchs (2016)	Rapid labour-market integration but limited long-term support for social adaptation.
Social Market	Fusion of welfare policies with market principles, prioritizing equity.	Schlösser et al. (2017); Edling et al. (2014); Myant (2021)	Strong social safety nets facilitate assimilation but may induce labour rigidities.
Mixed	Combination of liberal and corporatist elements, family-based welfare.	Hill (2019); Szelényi & Mihályi (2020); Costa-Font (2012)	Intermediate outcomes; partial protective measures often undermined by fiscal limits.

These definitions illustrate a wide spectrum of administrative philosophies, from minimal intervention in Neoliberal regimes to heavily institutionalized welfare in Social Market contexts. Mixed economies incorporate both styles, reflecting transitional trajectories and multifaceted social priorities. The result is a differentiated landscape wherein migration assimilation rests not solely on national political will but also on the structural design of state-market relations.

The study applies a practical categorization based on the established characteristics of each model:

- **Neoliberal**: Countries with minimal social spending, market-oriented reforms, and high labour market flexibility, such as the Baltic states (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania), Ireland, and the United Kingdom (pre-Brexit).

  Neoliberalism within the EU primarily emphasizes free market principles, privatization, and deregulation (Stockhammer, 2013; Mulvey & Davidson, 2018). This approach seeks to minimize government intervention in the economy, allowing market forces to dictate outcomes.

  The neoliberal model that has been popular in the Baltic states (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania), Ireland and the United Kingdom (before Brexit) is associated with economic liberalization, low social security and a preference for minimal state intervention in the economy to address. This approach, based on the principles of a liberal economic system, prioritizes labour markets, governance, and low public spending. In practice, this model has facilitated rapid adjustment and economic growth after the crisis but has had a negative impact on social cohesion and integration of immigrants. For example, the Baltic states, despite their economic strength and resilience, face challenges in providing adequate social protection to support the most vulnerable, including immigrants. These restrictions often lead to a lack of integration, where economic integration of immigrants can occur, but social integration remains incomplete.

Countries like the United Kingdom, especially during the tenure of Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, embraced neoliberal reforms that prioritized private enterprise and reduced the role of the state in economic activities (Fuchs, 2016; Balan, 2023). All the Baltic countries acted as strong European states after joining the Union. Latvia and Lithuania used aggressive neoliberal economic reforms (cutting public spending, including social spending, increasing taxes, etc.) to bring macroeconomic measures in line with the Maastricht criteria to join the European Monetary Area, but this policy carries risks (Aidukaite, 2009; Sommers et al., 2014; Juska, 2024). Both countries have higher rates of poverty or exclusion than the EU average.

- **Social Market**: States combining robust welfare systems with market principles, including Germany, Austria, the Nordic countries (Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Norway), and others like France and Switzerland.

Conversely, the social market economy model embodies a commitment to both free market practices and social welfare. This model emphasizes the importance of social justice alongside economic efficiency.

The social market model encompasses the Nordic countries (Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Norway) and continental Europe (Germany, Austria, Belgium, France, Switzerland) and combines strong welfare systems with market principles. This example exemplifies a strong commitment to egalitarianism, ethical business dealings and inclusive social policy. Nordic countries emphasize universality and equality, provide a comprehensive support system for immigrants, and promote economic and social integration. However, these systems often come with drawbacks, such as a tight labour market and heavy fiscal burdens, which can cause problems during an economic downturn. Currently, continental European countries tend to emphasize CSR within a social market framework, in which state intervention is balanced with an active role for social partners such as trade unions and employers' associations. These approaches have proven effective in managing economic crises and labour market adjustments, but adaptation to large-scale migration varies, depending on national capacities and political priorities.

Germany is often cited as a key example of the social market economy, which combines policies aimed at economic growth with robust social safety nets (Schlösser et al., 2017). Countries like Sweden and Denmark illustrate this economic approach, where the state intervenes in areas such as healthcare and education while encouraging entrepreneurial activity in other sectors (Edling et al., 2014). These nations have managed to maintain high standards of living through this balanced approach, resulting in robust economic performance. The recent challenges brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the importance of social market principles, as many EU countries expanded welfare benefits and direct support to citizens to cushion the economic impact of lockdowns (Myant, 2021).

- **Mixed**: Transitional or evolving economies blending corporatist, statist, and familial elements, such as Southern and Central-Eastern European countries (Italy, Spain, Poland, Bulgaria, etc.).

Mixed economies also play a significant role in the EU, blending elements of both neoliberal and social market models (Hill, 2019; Szelényi & Mihályi, 2020). In these systems, the government retains a significant role in overseeing certain sectors while allowing free-market competition to flourish in others.

The mixed economy, most commonly seen in Southern and Central Eastern Europe (CEE), represents a mixed system that combines economic, social and family elements. Countries such as Italy, Spain, Greece, Portugal, Poland, Hungary and Romania have demonstrated the importance of their political systems and historical and revolutionary developments. Southern European countries, often referred to as "Mediterranean" economies (Costa-Font, 2012), are particularly vulnerable to illicit trade, family welfare and debt. These characteristics have limited their ability to implement similar economic growth strategies and strong migration policies, especially when the eurozone crisis was created. For example, Greece and Italy, which are at the forefront of the migrant crisis, have faced increasing pressure to balance humanitarian aid with financial and resource constraints, leading to imbalances in the integration of migrants into the national economy as a whole. More recent examples include the austerity measures implemented in Greece following the 2008 financial crisis, reflecting the EU's inclination towards neoliberal policies as a means of economic recovery (Graham-Harrison, 2015). Yet, still struggling to find the right balance and implemented mixed methods.

Table 2. The EU countries* economic models. Note: pre-Brexit.

Neoliberal		Social Market			Mixed		
Estonia Ireland Latvia	Lithuania United Kingdom *	Austria Belgium Denmark Finland	France Germany Luxembourg Netherlands	Norway Sweden Switzerland	Bulgaria Croatia Czechia Greece	Hungary Italy Poland Portugal	Romania Slovakia Slovenia Spain

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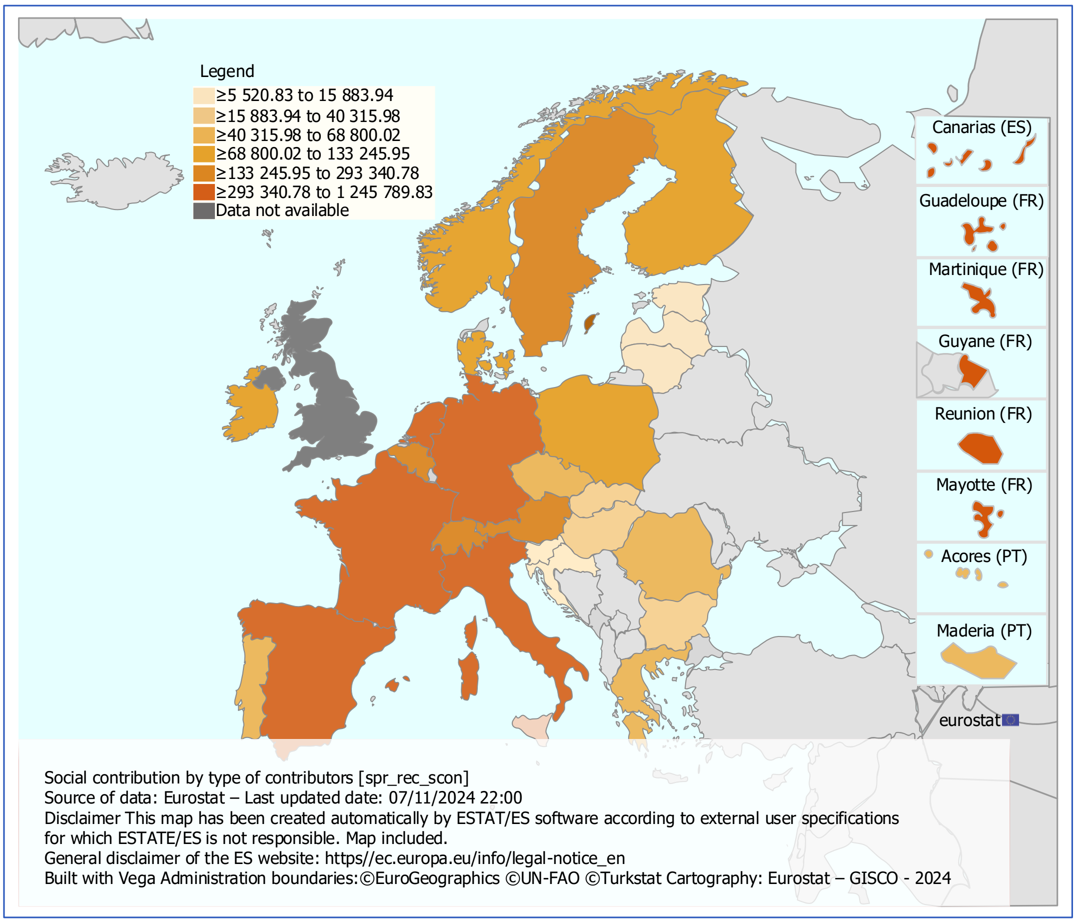
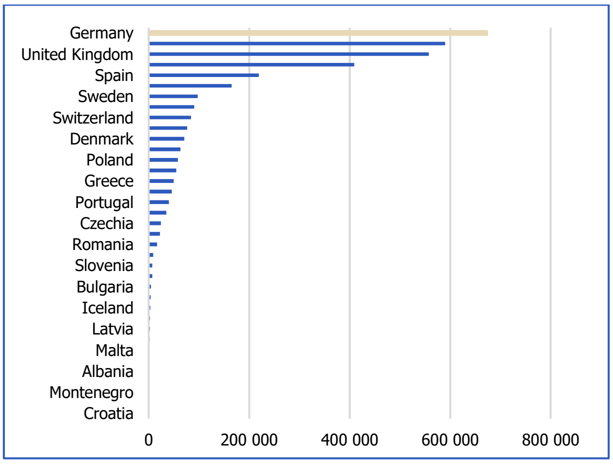
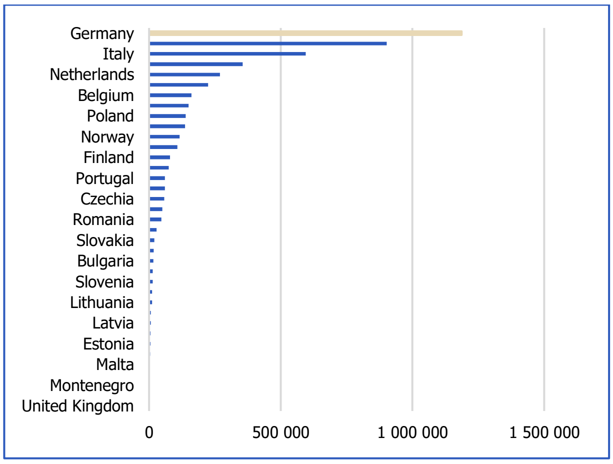
The classification of EU nations into different economic models (Table 2) offers a starting point for grasping the social-economic forces influencing the results of public policy. These models—neoliberal, social market, and mixed—allow us to view inequalities in social contributions and social protection spending across member countries. Emphasizing the monetary underpinnings of welfare systems in different economic settings, Figure 1(a) shows the variation in types of contributions by 2022. Figure 1(b) meanwhile shows changes in social protection spending from 2007 to 2022, therefore reflecting the long-term development of state welfare funding in view of pressures of migration and economic restructuring. These numbers taken together provide some perspective on the real-world effects of economic models by showing how financial goals correspond with societal goals as well as by showing how these relationships affect a state's ability to tackle the challenges of integration, resilience, and fair growth.



(a)





(b)

Figure 1. (a) Social contributions by type of contributors in 2022; (b) Expenditure on social protection in the EU by type of expenditure in 2007 and 2022. *(Source: Eurostat, (2024))*

The map in Figure 1 (a) shows the distribution of public contributions in 2022 across the EU, broken down by contribution rate. This map shows clear differences in public participation, reflecting differences in economic structure, fiscal capacity and welfare models across regions.

Countries such as Germany, France, Italy, Spain and the Netherlands have the highest public support, exceeding EUR 133,245.95. This is consistent with the classification of a social market economy, which is characterized by a well-developed welfare system and public spending. These contributions support strong health care, pensions and unemployment benefits, making a sustainable contribution to the economic recovery of immigrants.

Contributions in the Nordic countries, including Sweden, Finland and Denmark, as well as Belgium and Austria, range from EUR 40,315.98 to EUR 133,245.95. These economies have stable social values, emphasize equality and social welfare policies, and are responsible for achieving fiscal sustainability. Their strong institutional frameworks enable efficient allocation and support for both natives and immigrants.

Countries such as Greece, Bulgaria, Romania and Baltic countries report lower levels of public contributions (EUR 5,520.83 to EUR 40,315.98), reflecting budgetary constraints and weak welfare infrastructure. These countries are often classified as mixed economies and face challenges in maintaining social spending despite economic changes. Social protection gaps in these regions hinder the ability of immigrants to effectively integrate into society, exacerbating inequality and social conflict.

The 2007 figures, which correspond to the pre-financial disaster era, highlight a major inequality in social protection expenditure across European Union member states. At the upper end of the range, Germany, the United Kingdom, and Italy allocate large segments of their GDP to social protection. These costs are in line with the more general features of social market economies, which have comprehensive and inclusive welfare programs. Similar to their emphasis on egalitarian welfare systems, Nordic nations like Sweden and Denmark also stand out. On the other side, nations from Southern and Central-Eastern Europe such as Romania, Bulgaria, and the Baltic states have relatively modest levels of social protection spending. This distribution shows the transitional character of mixed economies, under which institutional growth and fiscal restrictions restrict the range of social welfare measures.

The numbers in 2022 show significant changes in social protection spending, with Germany leading second after France, then Italy, and Spain behind. The considerable rise in France's spending, compared to 2007, shows a resurgence of dedication to welfare ambitions maybe sparked by the socio-economic difficulties presented by the migration crisis and the continued impact of the COVID-19 epidemic. Spain's rank in the upper category suggests a major spur for its social protection system, perhaps caused by the dual demands of economic recovery attempts and immigration assimilation.

In the setting of temporary employment, the categorization of European economic models gives a key basis for grasping labour market segmentation and the vulnerability of migrant workers. Fassani and Mazza (2020) point out that although the average share of workers on temporary contracts in the EU is 11%, it varies greatly among member nations. The information suggests clear trends corresponding to the neoclassical, social market, and mixed economic systems, thereby highlighting how financial systems affect migrant employment insecurity.

The general proportion of temporary contracts is quite low in neoliberal economies like Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Ireland, suggesting a desire for flexible labour markets with strong turnover and challenging employment structures. This may not, however, mean more stability in employment for migrants. Although a flexible labour market is seen to have several benefits, the lack of stringent institutional protections worsens job instability for immigrants, especially those from non-EU nations. The research shows that in Poland (21 p.p. higher than natives), Italy (13 p.p.), and Spain (11 p.p.), extra-EU migrants are disproportionately under temporary agreements — nations whose labour markets follow a hybrid neoliberal approach incorporating market liberalization and transitional protective measures. This implies that the degree of migrant precarity is determined by the level of state intervention and the strength of social policy structures even inside neoliberal economies.

In France, Germany, and the Nordic countries (social market economies) government intervention is very much responsible for the direction of labour market results. Though these economies offer more organized channels for migrant jobs, the figures show that extra-EU migrants still have a much greater chance of finding temporary employment. Notwithstanding extensive welfare schemes, non-EU workers are overrepresented in France (8 p.p.), Sweden (7 p.p.), and Denmark (7 p.p.) for example. This implies that although social market systems offer more robust labour guarantees, rigid labour rules and job constraints may restrict migrant access to stable, long-term agreements.

State-backed integration programs including language instruction, talent certification, and job subsidies help to make social market economies more available. Maintaining these projects, however, carries a heavy financial cost that creates financial

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and political restrictions, therefore delaying the switch from temporary to permanent employment for migrant workers. Moreover, sectoral labour scarcity in critical services, education, and healthcare mean that migrants frequently take interim jobs in these sectors but run into red tape trying to find permanent ones.

Countries classified as mixed economies—especially Italy, Spain, and Greece—exhibit the most significant range of immigrant labour market results. Italy (10 p.p.) and Greece (8 p.p.) have especially wide disparities tussen native and migrant employment stability, therefore Fassani and Maazza (2020) underscore that Southern and Central Eastern European nations have the highest disparities. These nations have inconsistent policies, haphazard enforcement, and economic instability, which worsen migrant worker marginalisation even while they provide some level of labour regulation.

In Spain and Greece, the legacy of economic downturns has resulted in a dual labour market: native employees are more liable to have long-term employment agreements, whereas migrants—particularly extra-EU ones—are forced into low-security, short-term employment. In Poland, the lack of institutional systems for migrant labour protection exacerbates precariousness among non-EU employees together with the strong employer dependence on flexible employment arrangements.

The different levels of labour market flexibility in these economic systems and their consequences for immigration integration are among the main findings. Flexibility is a tool for encouraging economic dynamism in neoliberal economies defined by free markets and little state interference (Prasad, 2006). Although this strategy helps quick economic adjustment and job creation, it frequently hampers long-term immigration integration since support systems are dispersed and social protections are weak. In nations such as Estonia and Latvia, where neoliberal ideas prevail, for example, migrants might find low-wage jobs but suffer important housing, schooling, and healthcare access challenges, therefore becoming economically marginal over time.

In contrast, social market economies use organized channels for integration and extensive welfare systems to harness different methodologies (Craig Lefebvre, 2013). Common in nations such as Germany, Sweden, and Denmark, these models offer migrants comprehensive social services including language training, vocational training, and focused employment initiatives. Such inclusiveness, however, sometimes goes together with labour market rigidities—centralized wage bargaining and strong levels of employment protection. Although these characteristics help to reduce inequality and foster social cohesion, they might in times of economic stagnation or crisis stall the inclusion of migrants into the workforce. The compromise between efficiency and inclusivity therefore becomes a distinguishing feature of social market economies.

European Union economic restructuring can therefore be seen as a series of coordinated or sometimes conflicting changes meant to maximize national competitiveness, lower macroeconomic imbalances, and address demographic changes. Against this backdrop, migrant groups offer chances for labour market growth even as they compel governments to devise social inclusion policies.

Given these stages, current empirical data validate those economic models produce different results for poverty rates and general social well-being in immigrant populations. Research into many Baltic nations, for example, points to a speedier post-crisis GDP growth linked with little government control of the labour market. Estonia or Latvia, though, have few social programs and therefore somewhat pronounced differences in language instruction and migrant housing availability. Though economic activity is feasible, the unexplored fewer material aspects of integration allow for disjointed or incomplete assimilation.

At the same time, Germany and the Nordic nations provide an example of the Social Market philosophy of even growth. Per Edling et al. (2014) National and local government organizations in Sweden spend large sums on vocational training for migrants. This technique allows for more constant job retention and fewer skill gaps. Still, the very structural design that ensures wide-ranging safeguards can create complexity: small company wage agreements or strict labour rules sometimes discourage companies from employing migratory workers without local credentials, hence lengthening the assimilation period.

Postcrisis healing and immigrant integration activities are made more difficult by historical inheritance and regional disparities found in mixed economies—that is, in southern or eastern Europe. Greece provides a sharp case: limited public spending weakened any coherent migration plan, rendering many new arrivals living in difficult circumstances despite post-2008 crisis austerity efforts meant to restore fiscal stability. The motivation to follow or realign with EU standards sometimes promotes conflicting policies: governments try to bring in migrant labour for agriculture or service sectors but lack complete plans for permanent residency and native language learning. Therefore, immigrants contend with cycles of brief work and little mobility inside the economy.

The changing environment of European migration integration moreover intermix with more general demographic and geopolitical factors. Migration patterns can change suddenly owing to more stringent border controls, different asylum policies, and the consequences of worldwide conflicts. By contrast, economic models stay fairly stable in their structural logic. Social Market states change by adjusting welfare policies or launching transitional job training programs; Neoliberal systems rely on market signals to push or pull work; Mixed economies have difficulty reconciling paternalistic spending patterns and limited funds. Therefore, strong assimilation depends on coordinated action that balances state capacity, institutional structures, and labour market circumstances—not just one policy tweak.

Policy-wise, these differences challenge any homogeneous EU-wide migration assimilation plan. Policymakers have to consider structural readiness to welcome new players, the degree of social infrastructure, and local institution competence to minimise possible discrimination or alienation. Recognizing that the same model which confers rapid post-crisis economic growth may undermine long-term cohesion underscores the tension between short-term efficiency and inclusive development.

Given these structural disparities, lawmakers and policymakers must adopt targeted strategies that align with the economic framework of each member state. Table 3 outlines key challenges, core observations, and recommended policy interventions based on economic model type.

Table 3. Targeted Policy Solutions for Migrant Employment Stability and Social Integration. Note: pre-Brexit.

Economic Model	Key Challenges	Observations	Policy Recommendations
Neoliberal (Estonia, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, UK*)	1. High labour-market flexibility but weak social protection for migrants. 2. High migrant poverty rates despite employment. 3. Temporary contracts dominate migrant employment.	▪ Economic liberalization ensures fast hiring, but migrants remain in low-wage, precarious roles. ▪ Minimal public investment in upskilling and long-term social inclusion. ▪ Risk of perpetuating cycles of labour-market marginalization.	▪ Link welfare assistance to skill-building: Create targeted language programs and vocational training to move migrants beyond low-wage traps. ▪ Introduce financial incentives for employers to transition migrants from temporary to permanent contracts. ▪ Develop limited but effective safety nets without overregulating labour markets.
Social Market (Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland)	1. The high fiscal burden associated with migrant support programs. 2. Slow transition from welfare to stable employment due to labour-market rigidities. 3. Employers may be reluctant to hire migrants due to strict regulations.	▪ Welfare models reduce extreme poverty among migrants but may create overreliance on social benefits. ▪ Labour-market access is slow, limiting job mobility. ▪ Long-term economic integration is strong, but initial employment gaps persist.	▪ Revise labour regulations to create flexible entry points for migrants in small and medium enterprises (SMEs). ▪ Expand private-public partnerships to share the cost of migrant integration. ▪ Reduce bureaucratic barriers for migrants in regulated professions (healthcare, engineering, education).
Mixed (Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechia, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain)	1. Unstable labour policies lead to employment insecurity. 2. High native-migrant employment gaps, particularly in Southern Europe. 3. Regional disparities in migrant welfare access.	▪ Policy inconsistency and weak institutional support create barriers to integration. ▪ Migrants disproportionately concentrated in low-security, informal, or seasonal work. ▪ High poverty gap due to budget constraints and reliance on extended family networks.	▪ Mitigate budget constraints through EU-backed migrant integration funds. ▪ Strengthen enforcement of labour laws to reduce informal employment risks. ▪ Improve regional coordination in welfare access to ensure equal opportunities across provinces.

Harmonizing integration policies across the European Union still presents difficult questions. Although worldwide criteria might help to lessen differences, one-size-fits-all answers run the risk of undermining the special benefits of every model. A middle-of-the-road strategy would improve labour market integration by still guaranteeing minimal protections and permitting model-specific flexibility, therefore not disturbing economic systems.

Flexible labour markets, little state intervention, and a strong dependence on private sector initiatives for solving economic difficulties generally define neoliberal economies. Though it sometimes ignores more general social integration measures, this orientation gives fast job market access to the migrant workforce. For example, competitive recruiting methods and fewer administrative hurdles can simplify first work; yet, subsequent help—housing, health coverage, or legal guidance—remains lacking (Yeon-Hee & Ho Kook, 2020).

Liberalized laws can motivate businesses in a short, informal, or gig capacity to hire migrants without strong legal safeguards, studies of migrant labour conditions in market-driven economies have shown. Given this situation, immigrants might be stuck in poor working conditions with little access to training courses, pension plans, or unemployment insurance. These gaps in social coverage over time erode long-term integration opportunities, hence perpetuating social stratification and wage disparities (Tandfonline, 2014). A study done recently but oriented toward development (Wiley, 2023) shows

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that although neoliberal labour reforms could speed economic recovery after significant shocks, they run the risk of marginalising migrant groups when domestic demand varies or austerity policies take hold.

Practically, this market-first attitude can be seen as a conflict between the desire to maximize migrant labour and the absence of government-sponsored efforts to guarantee social integration. Policy debates normally focus on keeping financial prudence and business-friendly surroundings, therefore putting migrant welfare second. Supporters of change point to the requirement of committed bridging initiatives—language courses, acceptance of foreign credentials, and transitional shelter—to reduce possible exploitation. Nevertheless, carrying forward such policies usually contradicts the ideology that public spending should be kept as low as possible and the private sector allowed to determine social results.

As later conversations advance, more study should be given to:

1. Especially between fast-growing and economically backward regions, regional differences affect migrant integration levels.
2. Analysing, if occasional work leads to long-term stable career paths, would reveal long-term labour market developments.
3. Policy effectiveness assessments and guarantee that migrant integration plans match financial sustainability objectives.

Policies that respect the need for postcrisis economic growth and social cohesion to go hand in hand enable authorities to generate flexible solutions that acceptably include migrated populations without compromising more general financial goals.

DISCUSSION

The results of this research mesh with current knowledge on how economic models affect migrant integration in the EU, hence underlining the need for state action to promote long-term social and economic integration. Our findings also draw attention to structural flaws in particular models that contradict generally known economic theories. By contrasting their results with those from earlier studies, noting major variations, and suggesting new avenues of study to sharpen migration policy strategies in post-crisis Europe, this discussion section provides a context for these findings.

The findings confirm McNamara's (2023) and Myant's (2021) arguments that social market economies are the most robust in underpinning social cohesion and migrant labour market integration. The extensive level of state investment in employment support and welfare systems makes for more natural long-term integration. These models come with a major financial cost, though, and managing large migrant inflows effectively demands long-term public spending and institutional capability. Although these processes are typically slow and hampered by administrative complexities, their results show that Germany, Sweden, and France have effectively incorporated immigrants into regulated employment markets.

By comparison, the study's findings differ from those of Borjas (2016), who argues that flexible labour markets in insolent economies provide effective avenues to migration employment. Although our findings reveal that neoliberalism promotes fast employment, they also underscore long-run weaknesses, especially concerning job stability, pay growth, and social protection gaps. In Ireland, the United Kingdom (pre-Brexit), and the Baltic states, the lack of statelet integration mechanisms means that while migrants enter the workforce quickly, they remain trapped in low-paid, precarious jobs with limited opportunities for upward mobility. Contrary to Borjas' ideas, these results show that short-term employment increases do not always lead to long-term socioeconomic inclusion.

Moreover, the findings expand on earlier research on mixed economies (CostaFont, 2012; Szelényi & Mihályi, 2020), showing that inconsistent migration policies and financial instability present major obstacles to integration. Including Poland, Italy, and Greece, nations from Southern and Central Eastern Europe confront institutional fragmentation, budgetary restraints, and disparate policy enforcement that together hamper their ability to create consistent, long-term migrant integration programs. Although these states usually adopt temporary policy responses, a lack of continuous strategic planning causes enduring employment disparities and severe migrant poverty levels.

This research supports the claim that effective migrant integration depends on strong institutional support and government spending (McNamara, 2023; Myant, 2021). Still, it challenges the idea that long-term inclusion depends only on labour market flexibility. Our results indicate that, unlike Borjas' opinion of Borjas (2016), neoliberalism, successful in starting employment, has problems supporting long-term economic mobility and social cohesion.

EU lawmakers need to embrace context-specific approaches suited to the structural advantages and constraints of every economic model in order to create sustainable immigration policies rooted in evidence. As future economic and social changes take place, ongoing research will be critical in refining integration structures to strike a balance between economic growth and inclusive growth.

CONCLUSIONS

This research emphasizes the vital part of a nation's economic model in determining the results of immigrant integration, which affects access to employment, social mobility, and long-term inclusion. Though all economic systems have advantages and downsides, social market economies seem to provide the most appropriate mix of economic equilibrium and social protection guaranteeing a systematic way for immigrants to integrate. This does come at a price, though, since high public spending and inflexible labour markets might slow the move from dependency to steady employment.

Neoliberal economies, on the other hand, let migrants enter the labour force rapidly because of their flexible labour markets, but this typically comes at the cost of long-term employment stability, wage growth, and access to social benefits. As a result, while employment rates may be high, many migrants remain in low-paid, precarious jobs without opportunities for upward mobility. Even more difficult for mixed economies—that is, those in Southern and Central East Europe—than others. Unclear policies, regional inequities, and financial limitations complicate the development of long-term effective immigrant integration plans. Though certain immediate initiatives may provide some help, continuous unemployment gaps and considerable migrant poverty result from the absence of a clear, well-funded plan.

With these variances, a one-size-fits-all migration policy for the EU will probably be not effective. Policymakers should rather follow a more personalized course considering the institutional arrangements and financial capabilities of every nation. One major suggestion is to include migration signals in national budget planning so enough money is set aside to support integration initiatives. Mixed economies also need more robust social support programs, especially in areas where welfare access is restricted. Better policy coordination and European Union-supported financing mechanisms could go some way toward reducing these differences. Also, revising how public debt helps to finance integration might offer a more sustainable approach to paying for migrant upkilled training and long-term support programs, therefore avoiding labour market fragmentation and economic exclusion.

EU policymakers need to create flexible policies that take into account the varied economic conditions starting member states as migration patterns keep changing and labour market demands shift. Key to guaranteeing that migration remains a possibility for economic development rather than a cause of long-term inequality is a flexible but coordinated strategy—one that balances social protection with economic efficiency.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The Authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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ЕКОНОМІЧНА РЕСТРУКТУРИЗАЦІЯ ТА АСИМІЛЯЦІЯ МІГРАНТІВ У ЄС: РОЛЬ РІЗНИХ ЕКОНОМІЧНИХ МОДЕЛЕЙ

Європейський Союз (ЄС) складається з кількох економічних систем, кожна з яких по-своєму впливає на міграційну політику та інтеграційні процеси. У той час як деякі економіки цінують захист добробуту й соціальну стабільність, інші зосереджені на лібералізації ринку та гнучкості праці. Особливо в контексті посткризової економічної реорганізації, це дослідження вивчає вплив змішаної економічної, соціальної ринкової та неоліберальної політики на інтеграцію мігрантів.

Дослідження використовує якісний порівняльний аналіз для вивчення інформації, переважно з Євростату й політичних звітів за 2007-2023 роки. Розподілене на три економічні моделі (неоліберальна, соціальний ринок і змішана), дослідження оцінює, як інституційна підтримка, соціальні витрати й структура ринку праці допомагають визначати рівень інтеграції мігрантів у країнах-членах ЄС. Результати вказують на значні відмінності в стабільності зайнятості мігрантів, доступі до соціальних виплат і можливостях довгострокової інтеграції в різних економічних системах.

Результати свідчать про те, що країни з соціальною ринковою економікою (наприклад, Німеччина, Швеція, Франція) мають найповніші системи підтримки, що призводить до кращих показників довгострокової інтеграції, навіть незважаючи на початкову негнучкість ринку праці та значні фінансові витрати. Швидкий доступ до роботи, але за рахунок нестабільної зайнятості й мізерного соціального захисту, характерний для неоліберальних економік, що іноді змушує іммігрантів застрягати на низькооплачуваних, нестабільних робочих місцях (наприклад, Естонія, Ірландія, Великобританія до Брекзиту). Змішані економіки (наприклад, Греція, Польща, Італія) страждають від нестабільної політики та фінансових обмежень, що призводить до високої нерівності в царині зайнятості й постійного зростання рівня міграційної бідності.

Дослідження підкреслює необхідність різноманітних політик ЄС, які б відповідали структурним особливостям кожної економічної моделі. Необхідно враховувати роль державного боргу у фінансуванні інтеграційних програм, зміцнювати механізми соціального забезпечення в країнах зі змішаною економікою, а також ураховувати міграційні показники при розробці національних бюджетів. Ураховуючи мінливу демографічну ситуацію та економічні течії в ЄС, гнучка, але скоординована стратегія є життєво важливою для узгодження стійкої соціальної інтеграції з економічним розвитком.

Ключові слова: економічні моделі, міграційна політика, соціальна ринкова економіка, неоліберальна економіка, змішана економіка, інтеграційні стратегії, міграційні тенденції в ЄС, ефективність політики

JEL Класифікація: F22, O52, J61, H55