



## Revitalizing Europe: from Irregular Migration to Incubation

The European parliamentary elections are getting close and although the number of migrants that arrive has strongly [declined](#) over the past few years, migration remains a major topic to vote about. In reality, there can hardly be considered to be any crisis as, even at its peak in 2015, the influx has never been higher than [0.2%](#) of Europe's total population. Issues such as [climate change](#), the global [competitiveness](#) of European countries or the [challenges](#) of the upcoming 4<sup>th</sup> industrial revolution are far more urgent to address.

Migration seems to be a subject that can be used to influence people though. Politicians can position themselves, propose direct action and easily gain support. As a result, the European focus has meanwhile shifted from refugee integration and "[wir schaffen das](#)" to increased [border protection](#), migration [deterrence](#), and [returning](#) people – measures that are simple to communicate to potential voters.

Investigating further, the voters' vulnerability originates from [ignoring](#) the Syrian refugee problems in Turkey between 2011 and 2014, which in turn resulted in the uncontrolled spillover of 2015. The chaotic "invasion-resembling" nature of this flow and the way media covered it, created the European population's current [anxiety](#) – fears which politicians are able to [misuse](#). Another outcome of improperly managing migration is the position which [criminals](#) have acquired. Migrants and refugees pay thousands of Euros for their dangerous passage and they are often [exploited](#) or involved in [illegal employment](#) afterward.

Europe's moral obligation to accept a fair share of refugees and to evenly distribute them over its member states has become increasingly difficult to fulfill. Neither the Dublin [regulation](#) nor the EU disembarkation center [proposals](#) are able to properly address this issue, which currently causes a dangerous [stagnation](#). Contradictory, due to ageing and other demographic factors, Europe needs newcomers to fill its future labor [shortages](#). However, what Europe definitely does not want is uncontrolled flows and [criminal](#) activity. Refival therefore proposes an alternative to irregular migration: a fully structured approach named incubation.

*Incubation means seeing every migrant or refugee as a start-up company which needs to connect to the (business) culture and (labor) market of their target (host country). The approach further assumes a lean and cost effective operation in which money is invested in bridging (educational) gaps rather than spent on (unemployment or social) benefits. This optimizes chances for (the migrant's) success and upward mobility.*

Refival's first proposition is to offer paths for organized migration in which migrants and refugees do not have to risk their lives and use the [services](#) of criminals to enter Europe. If such alternatives are established, migrants who enter illegally will be sent back and directed towards official and thus legal migration options. Such a [system](#) has been [included](#) in the EU-Turkey [arrangement](#), but, until now, has [not been implemented](#) due to disagreements on where to relocate refugees within the EU.

Refival's second step is to match those who arrive or want to arrive with the best locations for their incubation. For recognized refugees this will dominantly be inside of Europe; for economically motivated migrants, coming from safe and stable countries, incubation will be recommended to mostly take place in the country of their origin. A grey area is those countries which face stability threats due to underdevelopment, over-population or climate change. In these cases incubation can be used to avoid that people become refugees by organizing their migration before they will be forced to flee and seek shelter elsewhere. Finally, incubation as suggested by Refival, can also be used for those who plan to return to their country of origin as it can smooth their re-integration process.

What is fundamentally different in Refival's incubation approach is that the relocation of migrants is mostly not directly or immediately to their "chosen" destination. *Refival introduces a transition stage to improve or speed-up people's adaptation.* This does not imply that people are hindered in achieving their goals. Incubation facilitates the best possible match, but at the same time it attempts to prevent mismatches.

Practically, Refival's incubator type mentorship offers individualized, primarily Internet assisted, education and work-experience. Its implementation is not home-based but uses a co-working or school environment. Many skills (including language and cultural skills) can meanwhile be [remotely taught](#) and acquired in this way.

For refugees in Europe, it takes an average of [five](#) years of full welfare dependency until they are able to connect to the labor market of their host country. At the moment, an estimated [80%](#) of this group is housed in urban areas. This means that, due to the high living costs of cities, little money is left to invest in more individualized [education](#). Refugees with larger educational gaps could thus greatly benefit from incubation in rural areas if the "lower living cost based" welfare savings would be invested in their personal development. This could at the same time bring a welcome stimulus for revitalizing Europe's currently declining and [depopulating](#) countryside.

For economically motivated migration, incubation in the country of origin could address the present lack of labor-market match-making. Currently, migrants too frequently end-up [unemployed](#) or face the problem of being [overqualified](#) for their often unskilled labor jobs. In cases where migrants stay illegally, they are further frequently exploited through informal labor arrangements. Incubation in their country of origin, as suggested by Refival, would beforehand offer proper language training and would match the migrant's skills with legal labor opportunities. If companies were to provide additional [remote apprenticeship](#) programs, migrants could also be educated "on-demand" cost-effectively. As a result, young people would become available for recruitment – a welcome investment in the revitalization of Europe's ageing population.

Being a continent that faces labor-force [deficits](#), Europe must be willing to invest in the education of its future workers. At the same time, it also needs to prevent [brain-drain](#). Selecting people who are already skilled and luring them with competitive salaries, often reduces the growth potential of developing nations. If a country invests in educating, for example, medical doctors, it should also be able to expect that these doctors will in return contribute to the health system of that country and are not recruited by, for instance, the [UK's NHS](#).

Finally, migration can be compared with sustainable forestry. If one cuts a tree, one needs to plant a new one – unless there is too much density in the forest. If a carpenter moves from Bulgaria to Germany to earn more, this does not mean that there is no job left in Bulgaria. However, if this job is not filled-in, it will disappear and over time destroy the local economy.

Refival thinks that everyone deserves open opportunities to improve their living standards and that, for those who [opt](#) for it, migration is a valid method to achieve this. However, Europe's social systems are not designed and are thus incapable of serving large irregular streams of newcomers with welfare. This implies that migrants must be as self-supportive as possible. Refival strongly believes that its incubation approach can reduce dependency and prevent an overload of the existing social security facilities. Doing so, it can contribute to a revitalization of Europe.

***If you are supportive of the goals Refival stands for, willing to contribute or aware of organizations that could fund its projects, please contact [me](#).***

Kind Regards,

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