

TAL TECH

ESTONIA 2019

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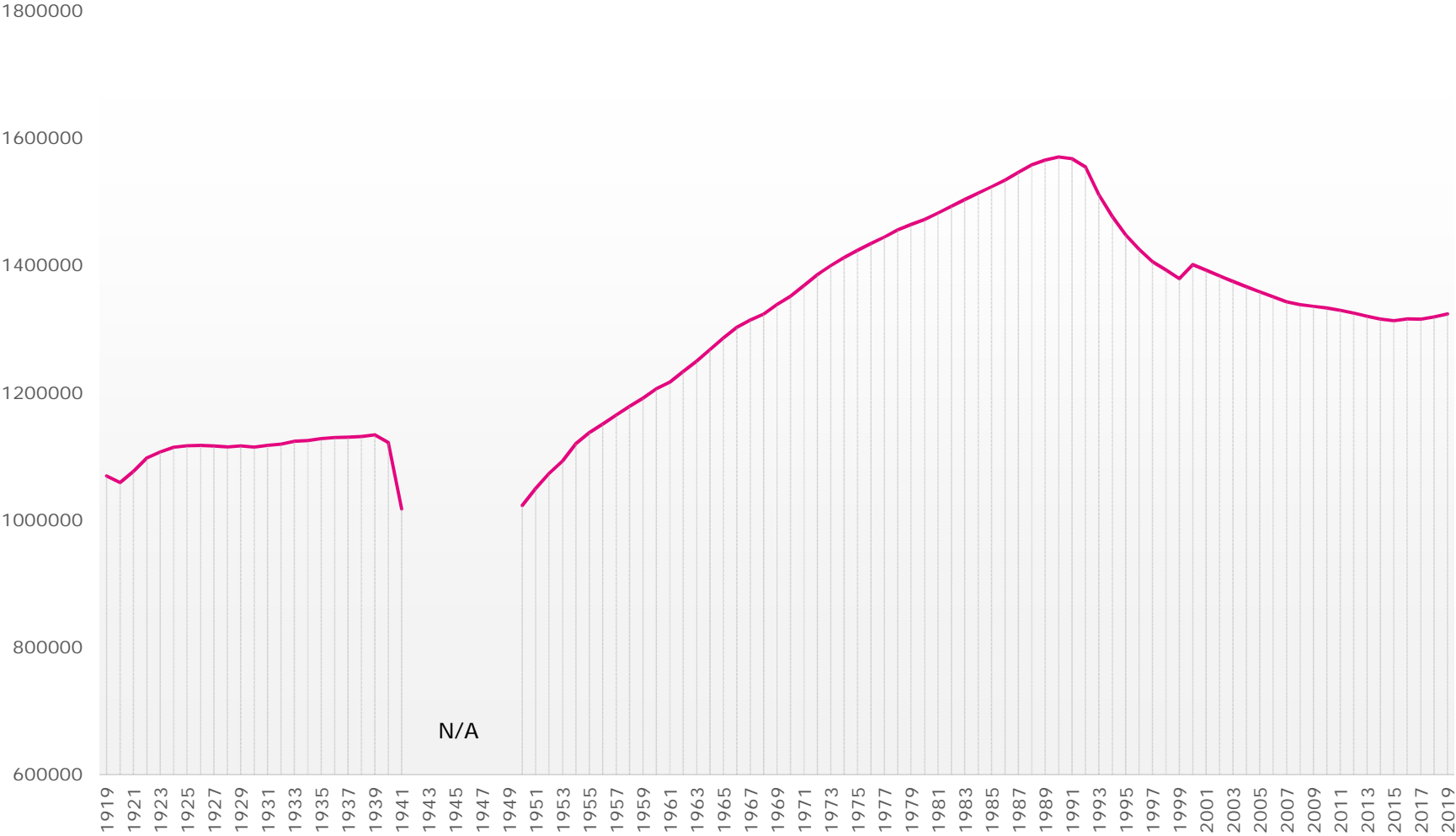


Erasmus+

Legal immigration 
Asylum seekers 



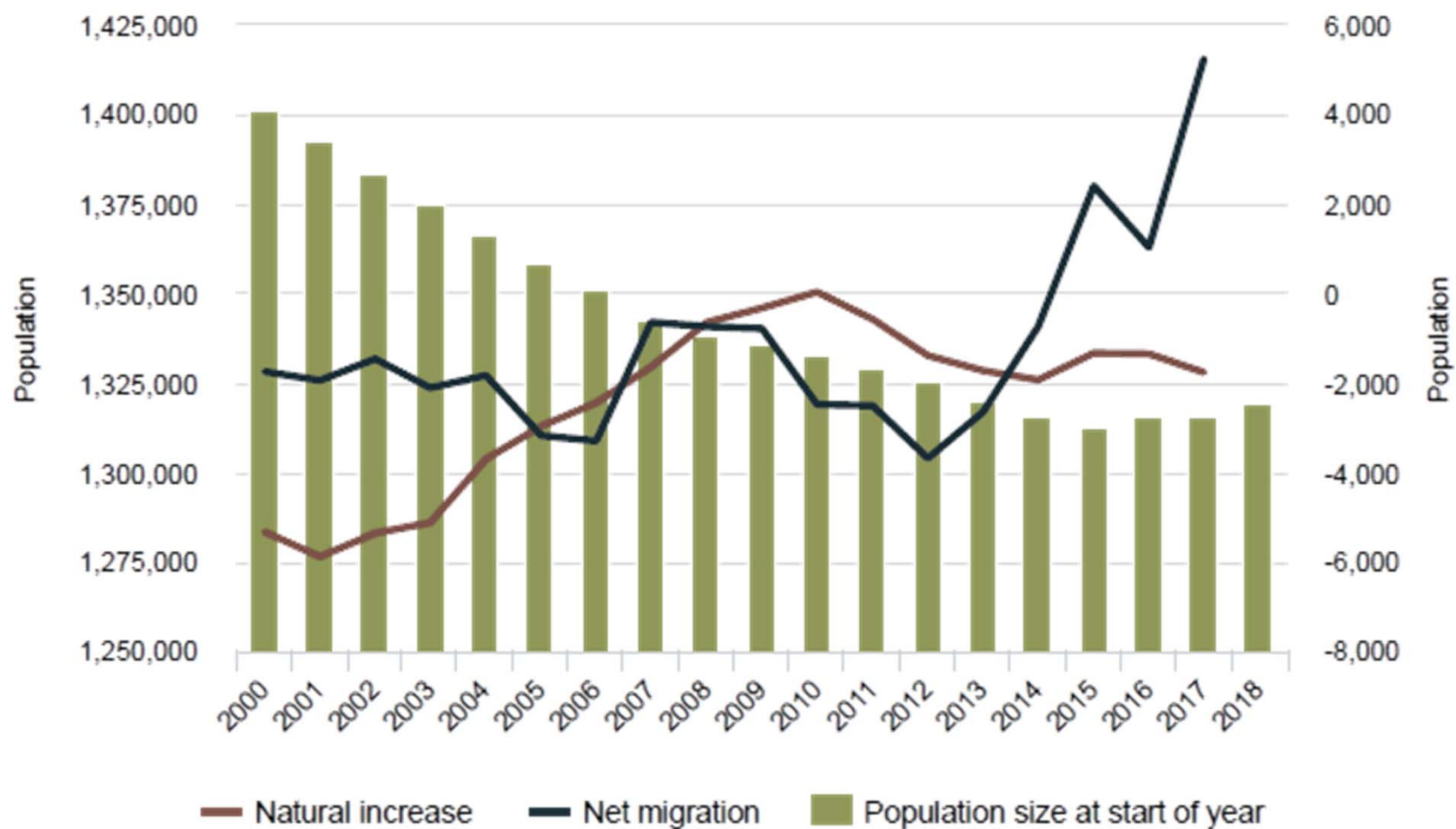
POPULATION CHANGES 1919-2019



POPULATION TRENDS

1881-1934	Population growth because of natural growth.
1939-1941	A sharp drop of population as a result of WW II, deportations and emigration.
1945-1950	First immigration wave as a result of the immigration of workers and military staff, mainly from the USSR.
1960s	Second immigration wave. Immigrants started to arrive to Estonia for economic reasons from the USSR. Industrialisation and the need for additional workforce.
1990s (beginning)	The collapse of the Soviet Union caused a sharp drop of population. Almost 80 000 people left Estonia in that period.
2000s	Population decline because of low birth rate and emigration from Estonia
Present	Population has increased for the past few years due to immigration. Natural growth of population is decreasing.

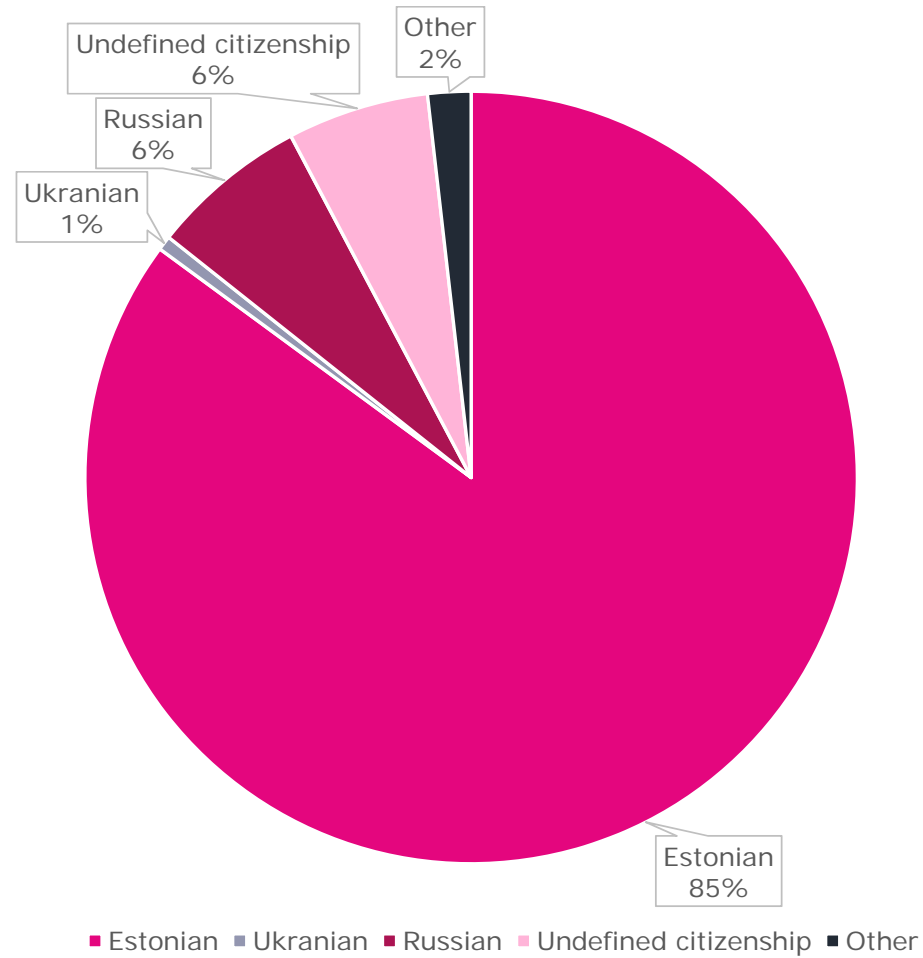
Change in population size and in events affecting it, 2000–2018



POPULATION DYNAMICS: ETHNIC

- **Nationalities (2018)**
 - 68,8% Estonian
 - 25,1% Russian
 - 6,1% Others
 - 1,2% Ukrainians
 - 0,9% Belarussians
 - 0,6% Finnish
 - 0,2% Latvian
 - 0,1% Tatars
- Around 15% of all Estonians live abroad.
 - Biggest Estonian communities in Russia, Finland, Sweden, USA and Canada.

POPULATION DYNAMICS: CITIZENSHIP



TYPES OF IMMIGRATION

- **Foreign labour.** Mainly from Russia, Ukraine and Belarus. Active in the construction, agriculture and manufacturing sectors.
 - PULL – Economic reasons.
- **Foreign labour (specialists).** Mainly in the IT-sector.
 - PULL – Thriving Start-Up sector; welcome programmes and integration activities
 - PUSH – Strict requirements for obtaining a working and residence permit.
- **International students.**
 - PULL – High quality of higher education; variety of international courses
 - PUSH - Strict requirements for obtaining a working and residence permit.
- **Family migration.**
- **Asylum seekers/refugees.**
 - PULL – Transit route to the EU
 - PUSH – Difficult to integrate; refugee communities in Western-European countries.

ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION

- Illegal immigration has **doubled since 2016**:
 - In 2016, 527 undocumented immigrants were registered and
 - in 2018, already 1110 undocumented immigrants registered.
- Illegal entry to Estonia usually blocked at official border crossing points, but
- Illegal border crossing outside of official crossing points is increasing
 - „Temporary“ check line („the Green Border“) between Estonia and the Russian Federation.
- Illegal immigration mainly from **Ukraine**, but also Russia and Moldova.

CHALLENGES TO IMMIGRATION

- Estonia's integration policy needs reviewing.
 - Recurring problems in the availability of services for foreigners (e.g. the availability of health services; language courses)
- **Negative attitude towards immigrants** increasing in the society.
 - Influence of the European migration crisis in 2015.
 - Emergence of **more radical views** and **polarisation** (us vs them, locals vs immigrants, Estonians vs the others).
 - The Estonian Integration Monitor report of 2017 showed that integration is hindered due to discrimination based on race, citizenship and language skills among the society.
- **Shortage of high-skilled labour force** in Estonia and a need to involve foreign workers.
 - According to the Estonian Labour Market Prognosis, over the next six years the Estonian working-age labour force will decrease by 43,000 people.
 - **Immigration quota 0.01% of permanent residents (around 1300 people in 2018).**
 - Strict requirements for obtaining a working and residence permit.

CHALLENGES TO IMMIGRATION: SMALL STATE CONTEXT

- Different perspectives (globalization vs nation-state): how to remain innovative and open but at the same time keep Estonian culture and language alive?
 - Tendency towards a more conservative perspective on migration in the society.
- Difficulties in integrating Ukrainian and Belorussian immigrants into the Estonian speaking community instead of the Russian speaking community.
 - Makes the integration process more difficult and increases tensions.
- Political discussions and debates about immigration and its critical aspects tend to reach a very large public audience rather quickly. Political tensions are amplified in public discussions and it can create cleavages in the society.

RESPONSES TO IMMIGRATION

- The principles and objectives of Estonia in migration policy are included in the Estonian Ministry of the Interiors' [Internal Security Development Plan 2015-2020](#).
- The objectives and strategy in integration policy are formulated by the Ministry of Culture in the sectoral development plan [Integrating Estonia 2020](#).
- Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communication has developed the [Estonian Entrepreneurship Growth Strategy 2014-2020](#). The document states the recruitment of foreign high-skilled workers into the Estonian labour market as one objective of the government.
- There have been suggestions to create a strategy for migration, but currently Estonia does not have one.

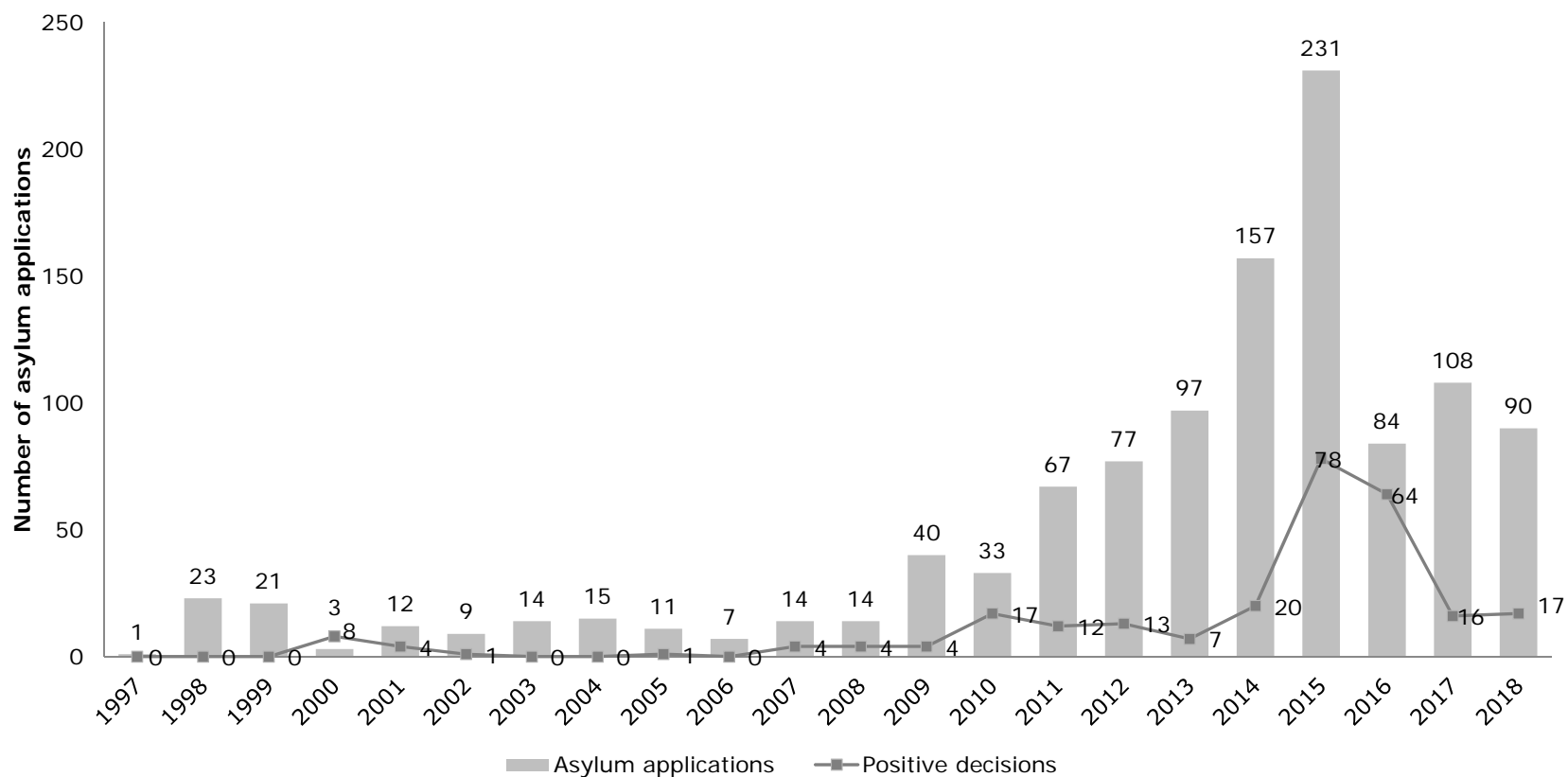
RESPONSES TO IMMIGRATION

- Development and initiation of new integration programmes for different type of immigrants.
 - For example international partnerships or **Estonian Language Houses** for people who want to learn and practise Estonian language and who want to know more about the Estonian culture and society.
 - „**Welcoming programme**“ for specialists, families, students, refugees.
- Discussion around loosening the quota of immigration and the conditions for obtaining working or residence permits.
- NGOs have stepped in to help the government in creating integration programmes for refugees.

THE EUROPEAN MIGRATION CRISIS IN 2015

- The European Migration Crisis in 2015 was a **novel challenge for Estonia**, as there was very little previous experience dealing with refugees.
- In the fall of 2015, the Estonian Government agreed to join the refugee redistribution scheme Under the framework of the European Migration Agenda.
 - Estonia agreed to voluntarily accept 570 refugees during 2016-2018.
 - During the period of 2016-2019 Estonia has received 211 relocated and resettled refugees. Many of them have left to other European countries.
- The topic of asylum seekers and refugees became a **highly salient issue** and **escalated quickly** in political debates and the media.
- Conservative right wing and populist parties amplified the issue and **negative public opinion** spread – the issue of migration was framed to be one of the most pressing problems for Estonia.
 - The media tended to follow this rhetoric of „fear“.
 - Anti-migration demonstrations took place to fight „mass immigration“ and racist social media pages were created.
- Conservative political parties used the debate to gain popularity.

TOTAL NUMBER OF ASYLUM APPLICATIONS AND POSITIVE DECISIONS DURING 1997-2018



FLASHPOINTS. GLOBAL COMPACT FOR MIGRATION 2018

- In November 2018, the Government of Estonia was divided on whether to issue its approval for the **UN Global Compact on Migration**.
- The issue became highly salient and created sharp political debates.
 - The debates were intensified by the upcoming parliamentary election in spring 2019.
- The opposing opinions of the Coalition parties of the Government **threatened the survival of the Government**.
- As the Government of Estonia could not reach a consensus on the matter, the question was sent to the Parliament for decision-making.
- The Parliament **passed a declaration** which **supported the Global Compact on Migration**.

CONCLUSION: PROSPECTS

- Increasing **pressure to change the current migration policy** and adopt a more strategic approach.
 - Shortage of labour force in Estonia.
 - Pressure to increase the immigration quota.
- Estonia is interested in employing and welcoming high-skilled specialists and at the same time there are still rather strict requirements and criteria for obtaining working permits or long-term residence permits.
- Specific types of immigrants are preferred – e.g. high-skilled specialists are favoured while asylum seekers, refugees and low-skilled people („cheap labour force“) are seen as a problem/burden.
- A more comprehensive overview about the level of integration of refugees into the society will be available after a few years.
- Challenges related to illegal immigration.

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