



# India–EU engagement and international migration: Historical perspectives, future challenges, and policy imperatives



Basant Kumar Potnuru\*, Vishishta Sam

India Centre for Migration, New Delhi, India

Available online 28 February 2015

## KEYWORDS

India–EU engagement;  
International migration;  
Migration policy;  
Bilateral relations;  
Skilled and unskilled migration

**Abstract** In the absence of a multilateral framework and a rule based global structure for the governance of international migration of people in all its complexities, countries engage in bilateral or regional cooperation in an attempt to engage and harmonize international movements and work towards a win–win situation. The current paper examines if and how the bilateral relationship or engagement between India and the EU has historically evolved and influenced international migration flows between them, and what potential future challenges and policy options they face for a successful engagement and facilitation of movement of people.

© 2015 Indian Institute of Management Bangalore. Production and hosting by Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

## Introduction

The movement of people across national borders has emerged as a subject of considerable policy debate among nation states in the 21st century. It has been argued that if global development was dominated by the movement of goods in the 19th century and by the movement of capital in the 20th century, the development imperatives of the 21st century will be dominated by the movement of people across national borders (Bhagawati, 1999). Therefore, it is not surprising that governments, non-state actors,

businesses and networks across the globe are engaged in shaping the pace and direction of the discourse on international migration in ways that might benefit them the most.

However, the right to restrict, regulate, manage or ease international movement of people remains a sovereign function. In this context, the policies of countries of origin and destination are positioned to be adversarial and perceived to be pursuing different objectives. For instance, beyond the currently prevalent “brain drain” or “brain gain” doctrines, the countries of destination tend to favour or adopt policies that provide them enough flexibility to decide to whom to grant entry (or not), under what circumstances and whom to assimilate in their society (or send back). Conversely, the countries of origin tend to lean to the other extreme of free movement and unrestricted access to the destination country labour markets.

\* Corresponding author. Tel.: +91 011 24675341.

E-mail address: [bkpeco@gmail.com](mailto:bkpeco@gmail.com) (B.K. Potnuru).

Peer-review under responsibility of Indian Institute of Management Bangalore.

In most instances, governance perspective and policy interventions tend to result in fragmented and ad hoc interventions. This produces outcomes on both sides that are predictably less than optimal and far removed from the needs of the economy. As a result, what is missing under most migration frameworks is a mutually beneficial, practicable, and collaborative policy effort. The absence of such policies restricts the global economy from deriving the enormous potential benefits that a well calibrated, market driven international mobility and migration regime might provide.

In the absence of a multilateral framework and a rule based global structure for the governance of international migration, countries engage in bilateral or regional cooperation in an attempt to engage as equitable adversaries to harmonize international movements (Khadria, 2001). Ironically, while the world has seen a proliferation of Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) and Bilateral Investment Protection Agreements (BIPAs) to reinforce the virtues of the free movement of goods and capital, there has been no visible progress in agreements to eliminate barriers on international migration and mobility of the people.

It is against this backdrop that this paper examines if, and how, the bilateral relationship or engagement between India and the European Union (EU) has influenced international migration flows between the regions. India and the EU are major trading partners and are engaged in a strategic Joint Action Plan with annual summit level talks. This, coupled with the fact that both sides are on the cusp of a new beginning through the soon to be concluded India–EU Trade and Investment Agreement, poses an urgent need to recalibrate migration policy. Furthermore, India and the EU, as partners, share several common values such as faith in democratic government, open societies, and knowledge based economies; both sides have much to gain from a well-coordinated and reciprocal international migration policy. This paper seeks to examine the key elements of such coordination and collaboration for facilitation of international migration. The paper takes a historical perspective and also identifies the future challenges and policy imperatives for facilitation of international migration between India and the EU.

## India–EU relations and international migration

India's engagement with Europe can be traced back to the influence of European colonial establishments in India since the 16th century, beginning with Portugal, the Netherlands and France, and later the United Kingdom. Given the close colonial ties, India and the UK maintained close relations on trade, investment, and development issues well after Indian independence. In fact, India was among the first countries to establish diplomatic relations with the newly formed European Economic Community (EEC) in the 1960s. Over the last two decades, these ties have been strengthened and taken beyond trade and investment issues. This has entailed initiatives such as the signing of the Cooperation Agreement in 1994, the annual India–EU summits since 2000, and the Joint Action Plan in 2005. In the recent past there have been efforts and consultations for signing a mutually beneficial free-trade agreement, including the 12th India–EU summit in New Delhi in February 2012.

All through these years, such relations have overtly or covertly been shaped by the then prevailing political climate, which in turn influenced the volume of migration flows. For example, the significant movement and exchange of goods, people, and cultures that took place between the two regions during the colonial period was based on the economic and political relations of the time. Similarly in independent India, the movement of high skilled professionals to Britain and other European countries was determined by the long-standing political and cultural relations India enjoyed with these countries. The frequent transnational movements between India and the European countries were marred from the mid-1960s till the 1980s owing to factors such as India's troubled relationship with Pakistan, friendly ties with Soviet Russia, inclination towards socialist principles of development, and nuclear proliferation issues. Thus, during this period, high-skilled Indian migrants explored new destinations such as the US and Canada. English language as a medium of instruction at the university level of education was one of the significant factors that enabled high-skilled Indian migrants to access US labour market successfully.

The recent spate of bilateral and multilateral initiatives between India and the EU is an outcome of the economic necessities in the present day global economy. Economic reforms and the aggressive opening up of the Indian economy set the premise for the renewal of India–EU ties through the "Strategic Partnership" and Joint Action Plan in 2005. This has been aimed at bringing together people and cultures to unlock the future potential for engagement and international migration between the regions.

In the exploration of the historical perspectives and future challenges and policy imperatives for India–EU migration, the paper has been divided as follows: The following section discusses the colonial ties and resultant labour flows between India and the EU; The third section examines India–Europe relations and international migration in post-independent India; the fourth section analyses India–EU relations and international migration with the advent of globalization; and finally, the fifth section concludes by highlighting the future challenges and policy imperatives for managing India–EU migration.

## Colonial ties and labour migration

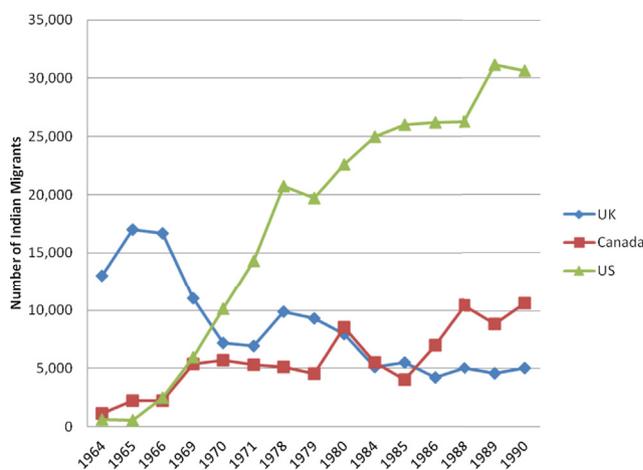
Much before the onset of colonialism, mercantile trade provided the roots for movement and settlement of people across countries and continents. During this time, Indians moved across the Indian Ocean and over the Asian land-mass as traders, entrepreneurs, merchants and capitalists (Lal, 2007). However, with the advent of European colonial settlements in India, the trend saw a reversal with more than 100,000 migrants from Britain and Ireland working in India, mostly as soldiers and administrators (Lal, 2007). During the same time, as noted by the UK Census 1911, only 4000 Indians were living in Britain (UK Census). The gradual shift in the concentration of economic and political power from Indians to that of colonial rulers had reversed the direction and quality of migration. For example, as against the inflow of British citizens into India

at the beginning of the establishment of colonies, Indian workers were moved to Britain in increasing numbers subsequently in the colonial period. The quality of flows from India to Europe also changed from traders and entrepreneurs in the pre-colonial period to that of slaves, indentured labourers and guest workers in the colonial period (Lal, 2007; p. 41–65).

During the 17th and 18th centuries, Indian slaves were exported through Portuguese, Dutch and French settlements in the region, and also through British and Danish settlements (Lal, 2007). European agents at the principal ports acted as suppliers with the support of local intermediaries and “recruiters”. After the abolition of slavery in 1834, the indentured system enabled European planters to import cheap labour from India to the plantation economies. “For nearly eighty years, between 1834 and 1917, till abolition of the indenture system, the plantation economies in countries ranging from Sri Lanka in South Asia to Surinam (formerly Dutch colony) in South America imported hundreds of thousands of Indians as indentured labourers or ‘coolies’” (IGNCA, 2007). The other major migrations that took place during this period were of soldiers who moved with the Imperial armies of Britain, France and the Dutch to fight wars in various parts of the world. Between 1917 (when the indentured labour system was abolished) and 1921, workers were brought as guest workers to Africa and the US from Southeast Asia to work in low paying jobs such as building railroads, mining and working on farms, and often under hazardous conditions (Lal, 2007).

### India–Europe relations and international migration in post-independent India

Since independence, India’s engagement with the world has evolved considerably, and so have the characteristics of international migration flows from India. India’s foreign policy goals enabled it to achieve some success in carving out an independent international role. Regionally, India was the predominant power because of its size, population, and growing military strength. Until the 1960s, India and Britain enjoyed a special relationship because of their common historical ties, political institutions, and interest in economic development. These ties facilitated high levels of trade, investment, and movement of people. A substantial community of people of Indian origin lived in Britain and significant increase in the emigration flows continued till 1965 (1), contributing to the business and intellectual capital of the country. When the UK experienced and coined the term “brain drain” of doctors resulting from the emigration of its doctors to the United States in the late 1950s and early 1960s, the UK looked at Asia, particularly India, to fill the void in the healthcare sector (Khadria, 1999). Moreover, India’s foreign policy stance of non-alignment helped India maintain and diversify its diplomatic and economic ties with the world, and thus, received developmental assistance both from the Eastern and the Western blocks (Sachdeva, 2009). India also established diplomatic relations with the newly formed European Economic Community (EEC) in the 1960s.



**Fig. 1** Indian emigration to select countries of destination, select years (1964–1990). *Source:* based on Khadria (1999), Table 3.4.

However, in the late 1960s and 1970s, New Delhi’s international position among developed and developing countries was affected by the wars with China and Pakistan, and disputes with other countries in South Asia.<sup>1</sup> India’s position was also affected by the Treaty of Peace, Friendship, and Cooperation which she signed with the Soviet Union in August 1971 (Heitzman and Worden, 1995). Furthermore, from the mid-1960s until the early 1980s, the difficulties encountered in India’s external relations and in conducting trade and investment in India caused countries such as Japan and the Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany) to seek more fruitful commercial opportunities elsewhere in the developing world (Heitzman and Worden, 1995).

Nevertheless, since 1965, particularly in the 1980s, India diversified its external relations by establishing relations with the United States and other developed countries in the Western block, while continuing to maintain close ties with the Soviet Union. This in turn influenced and incentivized potential Indian emigrant workers to explore newer destinations like the US and Canada. From 1965 onwards, the US also allowed the entry of Indian migrants at par with citizens of other countries by amending its previous Act which prevented annual entry of Indians beyond a specified quota (Khadria, 1999). These flows to the US have consolidated further with time. The US overtook both the UK and Canada as the most important destination country in the West for skilled Indian emigrants. It is only in the first decade of the 21st century that the inflows to the UK increased and reached close to the levels of the US in 2010 (Fig. 1).

Further, the steps taken by the Government of India in the mid-1980s to liberalize its economy from the “license raj” system and the consequent increase in availability of

<sup>1</sup> For example, Indo-Bangladesh relations deteriorated over sharing of Ganges water and flow of Bangladesh refugees to India. Other instances include Indo-Nepalese dispute after the Lhasa-Kathmandu road was built by China; and Indo-Sri Lankan disputes over denial by Sri Lanka to grant citizenship a large number of Tamils in the country and their repatriation to India (see Dash, 1996).

private investment and official developmental assistance from developed countries provided India with the opportunity to increase trade with and investment from Japan and Europe. Thereafter, Indian trade with countries of the European Economic Community (EEC) rose dramatically, and Japan became India's largest aid donor (Wagner, 2008). These developments in the 1980s laid down conducive conditions for exploration of opportunities by professionals, and the movement of professionals acquired momentum in the 1990s and thereafter.

### India–EU relations and international migration under globalization

Though India made large strides in terms of economic advancement and external relations between 1987 and 1990, the country experienced economic crisis due to its structural rigidities, burgeoning fiscal deficit and waning of foreign exchange reserves. Further, the decision of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) to stop exports to India, and mounting international pressure on India to cut its defence expenditure and better manage fiscal deficit have affected India's external relations. The Federal German government cut its official aid to India in 1991. The British, Canadian and the Japanese governments too indicated a cutback on future assistance if India did not reduce its level of military spending. Britain, France, and Germany increased pressure on India to sign the nuclear non-proliferation treaty (Bava, 2008). Lastly, concerns persisted in India that developed countries would impose human rights conditions as criteria for economic aid (Bava, 2008).

During this time a series of dramatic events took place around the world, which were seen as evidence of the ideological struggle between "capitalism" and "communism" and which paved the way for globalization (Barhoo, 2008). India's close ally, the USSR and its proxy regimes in Eastern Europe collapsed. Revolts by disaffected youth at the grassroots were seen in both Europe and Asia, as evidenced by events such as the collapse of the Berlin Wall, demonstrations in Tiananmen Square and in Myanmar (Barhoo, 2008).

India embraced economic liberalization in 1991 and witnessed burgeoning economic and political relations thereafter. In the early 1990s, expanding Indian exports and attracting investment from developed countries became a major priority in India's bilateral relations. India developed closer ties with Berlin, Tokyo, and the EEC to promote Indian economic interests and enhance its diplomatic relations. While Japan remained India's major source of bilateral assistance, Berlin became New Delhi's largest trading partner in the EEC. These developments occurred despite India's differences with developed countries over security, nuclear issues, and the attachment of political criteria to developmental assistance (Bava, 2008).

India realized the inadequacies of its foreign policy and the need to reassess it in the light of the world political system. The non-alignment framework of the Indian foreign policy left it without significant direction. The hard international practical considerations of the early 1990s and the disintegration of the Soviet Union removed much of India's

international leverage. Thus, the security and economic considerations, and domestic political influences led India to reassess its ties with the United States and other developed countries. This also paved the way for the further strengthening of the Indo-US corridor for international migration of the skilled.<sup>2</sup>

However, India's economic advancement in the 1990s and early 2000s set the context in which India and the EU came together and intensified talks and consultation processes for increased cooperation and partnerships. The Joint Political Statement of 1993 formally launched a political dialogue, with annual ministerial-level meetings. The 1994 Cooperation Agreement took India–EU bilateral relations well beyond trade and economic cooperation. The first bilateral summit in Lisbon in 2000 which launched the annual India–EU summits and the 5th India–EU Summit at The Hague in 2004 endorsed the EU's proposal to upgrade its relationship with India to a "Strategic Partnership". The two sides also adopted a Joint Action Plan in 2005, later revised in 2008, which provided for deepening and strengthening dialogue and consultation at the political, economic, and people and cultural spheres. The 11th India–EU Summit held in December 2010 reviewed India–EU relations stressing the importance of an ambitious and balanced conclusion of the India–EU Broad-based Trade and Investment Agreement (BTIA). The 12th India–EU Summit was held in New Delhi in February 2012 where the leaders of both sides expressed satisfaction at the deepening comprehensive bilateral relations and reiterated the commitment for their long-standing strategic partnership, working together with a balanced and result-oriented approach (The Council of European Union, 2012).

These consultations, when juxtaposed with migration trends, reveal a marginal shift with a significant increase in the number of Indian emigrants going to the EU in the late 1990s and early 2000s, compared to the pre-1990 period when engagement was very limited. The major destination countries in the EU (excluding the UK) are Italy, Germany, Spain, Netherlands, Belgium, France, Denmark, Norway, and Poland, respectively (Table 1). However, the increase in these numbers is not yet comparable to the increase of Indian emigrants to other popular non-EU OECD countries such as the US, Australia, Canada and New Zealand, apart from the UK (Table 1).

Although the current talks on India–EU engagements have underlined the importance of engagement on movement of people between the regions, it still does not clearly commit or spell out any roadmap for facilitation and enhancement of movement of people between the regions. The current focus of the dialogue in this regard, following the first India–EU summit held in 2000, is limited to setting up of a joint working group to enhance cooperation on delivery of consular and visa services, business and tourism, and facilitating the movement of people between the regions. Efforts to take forward the commitment of the Joint Action Plan on enhancement of education and academic exchanges between the regions are yet to materialize. While the small increase in emigration flows from India to

<sup>2</sup> See Khadria (1999) for the rise of the Indian community, especially knowledge workers in the US in the 1990s.

**Table 1** Flow of Indian Nationals in to Select OECD Countries, Select Years (Data Extracted on 16 Jan 2015).

EU countries (except UK)	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2010	2012
Belgium	NA	561	662	852	959	1,101	1,213	1,339	1,516	1,640	NA	2286	2215
Czech Republic	NA	366	31	230	288								
Denmark	230	248	208	248	216	343	402	487	489	482	NA	913	NA
Finland	92	112	158	0,186	188	195	315	381	504	534	623	486	571
France	912	1,041	1,004	1,142	1,261	1,221	1,155	1,104	1,235	1,375	1,499	2179	2506
Germany	4,715	5,077	6,544	8,949	9,433	9,227	9,125	8,364	8,911	9,367	11,403	13187	18063
Hungary	NA	143	229	101	3	318	260						
Italy	2,586	5,417	7,011	4,820	7,155	NA	5,735	4,152	4,774	10,973	NA	15246	11158
Luxembourg	16	17	33	36	19	9	9	23	65	135	178	127	143
Netherlands	NA	NA	661	684	614	638	564	1,217	2,011	2,526	3,454	3172	3956
Norway	268	243	229	315	329	286	3	356	564	998	1,068	1167	1513
Poland	86	352	311	377	534	615	682	673	688	686	1,031	1201	1151
Portugal	NA	NA	NA	904	827	263	239	337	481	497	401	915	927
Slovak Republic	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	03	039	48	35	31	74	103	002
Spain	240	289	648	835	887	1330	3,709	4,929	4,212	5,569	6,556	4758	4037
Sweden	309	322	369	428	556	752	834	1,077	1,024	1,146	1,548	2150	2027
Turkey	405	401	497	586	597	799	923	875	965	562	562	NA	NA
<b>UK &amp; Non-EU countries</b>													
United Kingdom	6,172	10,346	17,150	16,001	21,000	30,000	51,000	47,000	57,000	55,000	68,000	68000	36000
United States	36,414	30,157	41,903	70,032	70,823	50,228	70,151	84,681	61,369	65,353	63,352	69162	66434
Australia	3,204	2,984	4,582	5,812	7,573	8,194	11,278	12,788	15,240	19,823	22,725	23512	27865
Canada	15,375	17,457	26,123	27,904	28,838	24,593	25,575	33,148	30,753	26,054	24,549	30250	28945
New Zealand	2,199	2,666	4,308	7,443	8,244	4,791	3,133	3,483	3,718	3,870	3,162	3976	5337
Japan	NA	4,897	5,751	5,744	4854	5632							
Korea	NA	2,801	2370	2285	2582								

Source: OECD (2011).

the EU countries are pointers to the potential of these developments or commitments, they have not resulted in any dramatic increase in emigration flows from India to the EU countries. Therefore, it is important to critically analyse these developments to understand the situation and the future potential for cooperation and engagement in matters of international migration. This is also important to understand the potential for engagement on international migration issues in the wider context of India–EU engagement.

### Future challenges and policy imperatives for international migration

The EU's enhanced engagement with Asia was first highlighted in 1994 through the Asia Strategy paper called "Towards New Asia Strategy" (Commission of the European Communities, 1994). The changing economic balance of power was the pre-eminent reason for the EU to focus its attention on Asia as a region and accord it a high priority. On the economic front, the EU expressed the desire to achieve "market-opening for both goods and services and to overcome obstacles to European trade and investment". Politically, the strategy focussed on the Asia–Pacific region and on China in particular, calling for the protection of human rights and the spreading of democracy, good governance, and the rule of law. India has found mention in the strategy paper only in the context of poverty alleviation

and transition to market economy. Hence, it is argued that from 1994 until 2002, the EU did not consider India to be a strategically important regional player (Bava, 2008).<sup>3</sup>

However, factors such as India's remarkable economic performance in the early 2000s, enhanced foreign relations, growth of the middle class, increased size of the market, and leadership in the global information and communication technology (ICT), have altered international perspectives about India as a rising economic and political power. A major shift in the approach of the EU with the world, and in particular with India, can be found in the 2003 EU Security Strategy (EC, 2011), which identified six countries, including India, for a strategic partnership (Bava, 2008). From 2004 the India–EU strategic partnership has also evolved with the adoption of the Joint Action Plan in 2005 earmarking areas of cooperation of mutual interest.

A major challenge in translating government exchange and agreements into a substantial partnership has been the enhancement of trade, investment, and migration flows. There are also challenges in the form of concerns about security and diplomatic issues. The EU, which is one of India's largest trading partners, is seeking to expand the bilateral trade volumes. While China has become a manufacturing hub,

<sup>3</sup> In 2002, the EC country strategy paper implied that India had a limited role in development and economic co-operation, viewing India within the development paradigm as an aid recipient country not as a rising political power (European Commission, 2002).

India has demonstrated the potential to be a services hub for the world. India also offers a very attractive investment market for different sectors, given its viable legal structures and trained workforce. Synergies could be enhanced between India's large scientific base and manpower, with the EU supporting joint R&D projects (Bava, 2008). The potential areas and sectors that will enhance cooperation, partnership, movement of people, and development between the regions can be identified as IT, healthcare, science and technology, education, hospitality, construction and informal healthcare (home care providers) sectors.

### Sectors and occupations with potential for mobility of people

The European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP, 2010) estimates show a labour shortage of 12 million in the EU in 2020 across all levels of workers. This estimation factors an increase in the labour force participation rate in the EU from 71% in 2006–08 to 74% in 2020 (EIU, 2009). These projections also indicate shortages in large numbers in the high skilled categories as opposed to low-skilled category workers. However, employment and unemployment data indicate shortages in both skilled and unskilled categories of workers (EIU, 2009). Despite the priority accorded by the EU member states to address these shortages through increased domestic education and training, a significant part of these shortages have to be met with international recruitments.

However, due to the sensitive nature of immigration policies and the prevailing political and ideological sentiments around them, human mobility has remained very restricted in the EU member states. This is a pertinent factor in the context of the recent economic downturn and increase in the unemployment rates in the EU. A report of the International Labour Organization (ILO, 2012) shows that, despite the recent economic downturn, shortages of workers appear in areas such as medicine and engineering in the EU. Making pan-EU estimations to determine upcoming sectors becomes difficult not only due to the different demands of each of the member states but also due to differences in variables, types of respondents, sectors, and frequency of data. For example, Germany has been characterized by high levels of unemployment but with accompanied shortage of experts and specialist personnel in engineering and IT. Shortages also appear in the metals, electronics, and chemicals industries. In Ireland, shortages exist in the construction, financial services, engineering, IT, pharmaceuticals, healthcare and integrated supply-chain sectors. Similarly, Sweden has also experienced labour shortages in certain occupations and sectors, especially in long-term positions in healthcare and various types of other technical positions. Therefore, employers in Sweden have tried to ease labour migration restrictions since 2001, despite criticism from labour market boards, the Social Democratic government and trade unions (EIU, 2009).

In 2007, about three million jobs were unfilled in sectors such as information technology and engineering in the EU (EurActiv, 2007). As a response to this, a proposal for an EU Blue Card for suitably qualified third-country nationals was

put forth by the European Commission (EC) in October 2007 (EIU, 2009). The Council of the EU adopted the Directive on the Blue Card on May 25, 2009. Nevertheless, admission policies under the Blue Card still remain the responsibility of member states who have to determine the number of migrants to be admitted and the conditions of admission. This factor contributed to the lack of success of this scheme. The failure of the Blue Card scheme in the EU as a measure to attract and retain high skilled migrants from developing countries opened a debate on immigration policies – whether long-term settlement and integration of immigrants, or short-term and cyclic migration with mandatory return yield better results (Fargues et al., 2010). Martin (2007) points out the distinctive immigration policies adopted by the US and the EU by highlighting how the immigrant-friendly policies of the US that allowed multiple entry doors and flexible transition paths between status, i.e., from student to worker and from worker to immigrant, earned better results compared to the EU policies based on short-term and cyclic migration. The emphasis on mandatory return, after fulfilment of one assignment or term, for qualifying for application for another was highlighted as a major drawback. In the US, within the overall kinship-emphasis of the amendments and new legislations on immigration during 1980s and 1990s, priority was given to highly trained and educated professionals, at least for the first 7–10 years, explicitly (Khadria, 1999). Further, the lower tax rates for high income earners, the climatic conditions and an already existing Indian diaspora in the US are an added advantage to attract high skilled workers from India compared to the high rates of tax regimes, and fragile and not-so-aggressive immigration policies of the European Union and its member states.

In this context, policies concerning student mobility need to emerge as an important focus area for shaping the future strategy and economic policy between India and the EU. The current Indo-US economic and political relations are shaped by the cohorts of the Indian students who migrated to the US 15–20 years ago. Efforts must be made to provide this group with incentives to shift base to the EU as opposed to other markets such as the US, Canada and Australia. Flexible visa policies, more scholarships, mutual recognition of degrees, open opportunities for extended stay, and employment for students and professionals should increase the rates of retention in the EU. This should also potentially offset the competition from the US and other immigration countries. Jaffrelot (2006) argues that such policies should have three distinct advantages: firstly, they should project a positive and more immigrant-friendly environment of the EU; secondly, such policies can enable EU companies to hire well qualified Indian students and professionals; and thirdly, more specifically, they will attract the best minds in various fields to the domestic markets in the EU. However, the current student mobility schemes under the Erasmus Mundus Programme<sup>4</sup> suffer

<sup>4</sup> Erasmus Mundus is a cooperation and mobility programme of the European Union in the field of higher education that aims to enhance the quality of European higher education and to promote dialogue and understanding between people and cultures through cooperation with third-countries.

from lacunae in the areas of retention, coordination and recognition of the degrees between India and the EU. For example, in an informal discussion on India–EU Student Mobility, organized by the India Centre for Migration on 14th April 2012 (ICOE, 2012), the Erasmus Mundus Alumni Association – India Chapter highlighted aspects related to co-ordination and recognition of degrees under the Erasmus Mundus Programme and employment opportunities for its graduates as significant challenges under this programme.<sup>5</sup> These bottlenecks need to be addressed if such schemes are to be enhanced.

Another key area that has potential and offers a great degree of mutual cooperation under India–EU engagement is the mobility of science and technology professionals. The EU also expressed its keenness to attract Indian scientific talent in the EU–India Strategic Plan 2008–13. However, despite the EU's external image as a civilian and normative power, the EU has been unable to attract Indian scientific talent. The US on the other hand, takes a more flexible approach to allocating visas and this has enabled a large number of Indian science and hi-tech students and workers to go to the US. The Indian scientific diaspora in the US is another important factor that has facilitated greater mobility of scientific talent between India and the US. In comparison, the EU has struggled to integrate its immigrant communities and lacks a collective image to project abroad. Fargues et al. (2010) point out that the "directive 2005/71/EC" concerning the admission of third-country nationals for the purposes of scientific research hardly provides an attractive entry route for highly qualified academics. It is characterized by an overtly bureaucratic admission procedure and places an excessive financial responsibility on hosting institutions (p. 7)". Demographic decline with an ageing population is another reason why the EU is lagging behind in R & D. Therefore, there is a need to increase mutual visibility and to build scientific networks through enhanced education and academic cooperation between India and the EU. The EU presence at the civil society level can be enhanced by greater participation and outreach among academia, think tanks and the media. The mobility of science and technology students should be

increased so as to lead to a greater synergy of talent between India and the EU.

Another important aspect of India–EU bilateral relations that holds great potential for engagement is the trade in health sector services.<sup>6</sup> In the EU, due to demographic reasons, there has been a decline in the supply of health-care professionals, increase in demand for healthcare, rising costs, and overburdened public healthcare systems. In India, there is a substantial increase in outflow of medical professionals to the OECD countries such as the US, the UK, Canada and Australia. This calls for potential synergies for cooperation, and facilitation of the movement of health-care professionals from India to the EU.

Currently, the immigration of Indian healthcare professionals into the EU is largely limited to the UK. This is because of underlying barriers in the EU, such as, strict and rigid immigration policies, non-recognition of medical degrees, lack of knowledge on available opportunities and procedures of migration, and absence of geographical proximity to Europe. For example, medical graduates of third countries are required to repeat their specialized training and become naturalized before they are granted a full license to practice in Germany. Doctors holding provisional licenses in Germany have to work in hospitals with an assistant physician (Englmann, 2009). In Ireland, the limited registration granted to foreign doctors can last up to seven years holding up their prospects for obtaining full registration. In Finland, the license is granted stepwise: first to work in hospitals under supervision, then in health centres and finally in private institutions (OECD, 2007). These barriers are compounded further by cultural and language barriers.

Therefore, there is a need to ease immigration procedures and other restrictions affecting Indian healthcare professionals, so as to direct their movement to the EU. This needs to be undertaken through measures such as mutual recognition of medical degrees and experience, introduction of medical student exchange programmes, and scholarships for Indian medical students for study in the EU.

There is also potential to increase the flow of "grey" collar workers<sup>7</sup> from India to the EU. With respect to the migration of semi-skilled or unskilled migration from India to the EU, it is the irregular migration that caught the attention of policy makers and analysts. There is a considerable emphasis on the estimation and prevention of irregular migration from India to Europe. However, data pertaining to irregular migration is highly contested. For example, UNODC (2009) reported an annual figure of 20,000 irregular migrants to Europe from the state of Punjab alone. Another concurrent study by Bhawra (2013) assessed

<sup>5</sup> It was highlighted in the discussion that Government of India and the Association of Indian Universities do not recognize some of the Erasmus Mundus masters courses resulting in disqualification of graduates under the programme to take up the UGC-NET examination and Ph.D. programmes in India. Participants also outlined that since students are required to move between different universities in the EU member states to complete their masters programme, the credits awarded in each university or member state are not uniform and are not translated in English creating problems of conversion and calculation of grade points. Similar difficulties also have been faced in conversion or calculation of credits or grades obtained from Indian universities. Moreover, options for students from India to pursue careers in the EU, after graduating from the programme, also remain limited. On retention and employment opportunities for students graduating under the Erasmus Mundus programme, only 20% of students from India were retained, 50% of whom were retained in the UK alone. Quality of jobs and wages earned by these graduates in the EU are also causes of concern (ICOE, 2012).

<sup>6</sup> See Chanda (2011) for an in depth analysis of opportunities and challenges for trade in health services between India and the EU including the movement of healthcare professionals (GATS – Mode 4).

<sup>7</sup> Grey collar workers are semi-skilled workers who possess, unlike the unskilled manual (blue collar) workers, specific skill sets with an associate degree. They may include, for example, elderly, child and personal care personnel, security personnel, chefs and waiters, drivers, etc.

the same figures at around 1800. However, it has been observed that irregular migration from India to the EU is predominant in the northern parts of India, namely Punjab and Haryana. For instance, a micro-study of 1173 irregular migrants undertaken in 2012 based on records from the Delhi International Airport (Saha, 2012) reported that nearly 72% and 13% of irregular migrants in the survey were reported from Punjab and Haryana, respectively. These workers often fall within the domain of low-skilled and semi-skilled occupations, and are compelled by socio-economic and cultural factors to undertake migration at great personal risks.

A closer look at the analysis of the implications of irregular migration reveals that there are both costs and benefits to irregular migration. The irregular migration situation generally is mixed for both sending and receiving countries. Converting this irregular labour market segment into the legal framework is in the interest of both India and the EU countries. Therefore, expansion of access of legal options of migration (both quantitatively and qualitatively) for the semi-skilled and unskilled workers may be considered as a policy alternative by the EU and India for preventing irregular migration.

However, in leveraging this potential for promotion of semi-skilled workers and restricting irregular migration, India and the EU together have the onus to upgrade the skills and standards of the unskilled labour in India in areas such as hospitality, construction, and informal healthcare to match the EU standards. This would require initiating specific, customized programmes for skills training, certification and standardization. The EU could extend its cooperation, help, and support to India through its networks of employers, skills training institutions, and skill standardization mechanisms.

## Conclusion

Given India's strategic position as a major country of origin for migrant workers, and the foreseeable labour market requirements in the EU, there is a need for a closer inspection of policy initiatives on migration that could yield benefits to both India and the EU. International migration flows between India and Europe in the past have been dependent on the quality and strength of the political and economic engagement. The EU is unable to attract the best talent from India compared to its competitors at present. There is need for a collective approach in showcasing the EU as a destination market for Indian workers. The main challenge in this regard is to enhance EU presence in India through outreach and building of networks among academia, think tanks and the media. Student mobility needs to be given greater thrust; initiatives are needed across many important sectors including IT, healthcare, science and technology, and research and development. Advocacy groups need to be formed to protect the synergy of talent between India and the EU, and to enhance future cooperation, partnership, and development. There is a need to ease immigration policies for selective sectors of employment and education, and to initiate policies for mutual recognition of degrees and skills. Introduction of schemes for upgradation of training

and skills of unskilled labour and easing of entry restriction for them could potentially help prevent irregular migration. There also needs to be a minimal window in the policy for migrants from third world countries to choose long-term immigration and subsequently integrate into the EU countries.

## References

- Barhoo, L. (2008). *India's foreign policy challenges: Today and beyond*. Security research review. <http://www.bharat-rakshak.com/SRR/2005/02/7-indias-foreign-policy-challenges-today-and-beyond.pdf>.
- Bava, S. (2008). The EU and India: challenges to a strategic partnership. In G. Grevi, & A. de Vasconcelos (Eds.), *Partnership for effective multilateralism: EU relations with Brazil, China, India and Russia*. Monograph. Chailiot paper No 09. Institute for Security Studies and European Union.
- Bhagawati, J. (1999). *A stream of windows: Unsettling reflections on trade, immigration, and democracy*. Oxford University Press.
- Bhawra, V. K. (2013). *Irregular migration from India to EU: Evidence from Punjab*. <http://www.india-eu-migration.eu/media/CARIM-India-2013-03.pdf> Accessed 17.07.13.
- CEDEFOP. (2010). *Skills Supply and demand in Europe: Medium-term forecast up to 2020*. European Center for the Development of Vocational Training.
- Chanda, R. (2011). *India-EU relations in health services prospects and challenges*. Open access. Bio Med Central.
- Commission of the European Communities. (1994). *Towards new Asia strategy. Communication from the commission to the council*. Brussels <http://aei.pitt.edu/2949/1/2949.pdf>.
- Dash, K. C. (1996). The political economy of regional co-operation in South Asia. *Pacific Affairs*, 69(2 (Summer)).
- Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU). (2009). *Estimating potential labour shortage and supply in the European economic area. November 2009*. <http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/sitecontent/documents/aboutus/workingwithus/mac/estimate-potential-labour-short/estimate-potential-labour-short?view=Binary>.
- Englmann, B. (2009). *Recognition procedures for foreign trained doctors in Germany*. Presented at an International Workshop on practices for recognizing qualifications of migrant health professionals. At the HWWI, Hamburg, 18th and 19th Feb., 2009.
- EurActiv. (2007). *The EU's labour shortage time-bomb*, EurActiv online, 5 June.
- European Commission. (2002). *EC country strategy paper India 2002–2006*. [http://eeas.europa.eu/india/csp/02\\_06\\_en.pdf](http://eeas.europa.eu/india/csp/02_06_en.pdf).
- European Commission. (2011). *A secure Europe in a better world*. European Security Strategy. 12 December 2003. Brussels <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cmsUpload/78367.pdf>.
- Fargues, P., Chanda, R., Cholewinski, R., Guilimoto, C., Hultin, G., Meyer, J-B., et al. (2010). *India-EU Mobility: Where it stands and the way forward*. SWG Policy Note 2.
- Heitzman, J., & Worden, R. L. (Eds.). (1995). *Foreign relations: A country study- India*. Washington: GPO for the Library of Congress.
- IGNCA. (2007). *Mapping of India diaspora, creative tracks of Indian diaspora*. Seminar, 5–8 January.
- Indian Council of Overseas Employment. (2012). *India-EU student mobility: Perspectives from the ground. Summary record of an informal discussion organized on 14th April, 2012* (Unpublished).
- International Labour Organisation (ILO). (2012). *Eurozone job crisis: Trends and policy responses*. [http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/publication/wcms\\_184965.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/publication/wcms_184965.pdf) Accessed 13.07.12.

- Jaffrelot, C. (2006). *India and the European Union: The charade of a strategic partnership*. [http://www.ceri-sciences-po.org/archive/mars06/art\\_cj.pdf](http://www.ceri-sciences-po.org/archive/mars06/art_cj.pdf) Accessed 23.05.12.
- Khadria, B. (1999). *The migration of knowledge workers: Second generation effects of India's brain drain*. New Delhi: Sage Publications.
- Khadria, B. (2001). Shifting paradigm of globalisation: the twenty-first century transition towards generics in skilled migration from India. *International Migration*, 39(5), 45–71.
- Lal, B. V. (2007). *The encyclopedia of the Indian diaspora*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Martin, P. (2007). *Towards effective temporary worker programmes: Issues and challenges in industrial countries*. International Migration Papers. 89. ILO.
- Sachdeva, G. (2009). India and the European Union: time to De-bureaucratise strategic partnership. *Strategic Analysis*, 33(2), 202–207.
- Saha, K. C. (2012). *Irregular migration from India to the EU: Punjab & Haryana case study*. <http://www.india-eu-migration.eu/media/CARIM-India-2012-28.pdf> Accessed 17.07.13.
- The Council of European Union. (2012). *India-European Union Summit – Joint statement*. New Delhi. 10 February. 6396/12. Press 43 [press.office@consilium.europa.eu](mailto:press.office@consilium.europa.eu) <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/Newsroom>.
- UNODC. (2009). *Smuggling of migrants from India to Europe and in particular to the UK: A study on Punjab and Haryana*. [http://www.unodc.org/documents/human-trafficking/Smuggling\\_of\\_Migrants\\_from\\_India\\_to\\_Europe\\_-\\_Punjab\\_Haryana.pdf](http://www.unodc.org/documents/human-trafficking/Smuggling_of_Migrants_from_India_to_Europe_-_Punjab_Haryana.pdf) Accessed 17.07.13.
- Wagner, C. (2008). The EU and India: a deepening partnership. In G. Grevi, & A. de Vasconcelos (Eds.), *Partnership for effective multilateralism: EU relations with Brazil, China, India and Russia. Monograph. Chailiot Paper No 09*. Institute for Security Studies and European Union.