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CARIM-INDIA – DEVELOPING A KNOWLEDGE BASE FOR POLICYMAKING ON INDIA-EU MIGRATION

Co-financed by the European Union

Migration of Low Skilled Workers from India to the European Union

**S.K. Sasikumar
Rakkee Timothy**

CARIM-India Research Report 2012/15



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Research Report
Thematic Paper
CARIM-India RR2012/15

Migration of Low Skilled Workers
from India to the European Union

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CARIM-India – Developing a knowledge base for policymaking on India-EU migration

This project is co-financed by the European Union and carried out by the EUI in partnership with the Indian Council of Overseas Employment, (ICOE), the Indian Institute of Management Bangalore Association, (IIMB), and Maastricht University (Faculty of Law).

The proposed action is aimed at consolidating a constructive dialogue between the EU and India on migration covering all migration-related aspects. The objectives of the proposed action are aimed at:

- Assembling high-level Indian-EU expertise in major disciplines that deal with migration (demography, economics, law, sociology and politics) with a view to building up migration studies in India. This is an inherently international exercise in which experts will use standardised concepts and instruments that allow for aggregation and comparison. These experts will belong to all major disciplines that deal with migration, ranging from demography to law and from economics to sociology and political science.
- Providing the Government of India as well as the European Union, its Member States, the academia and civil society, with:
 1. Reliable, updated and comparative information on migration
 2. In-depth analyses on India-EU highly-skilled and circular migration, but also on low-skilled and irregular migration.
- Making research serve action by connecting experts with both policy-makers and the wider public through respectively policy-oriented research, training courses, and outreach programmes.

These three objectives will be pursued with a view to developing a knowledge base addressed to policy-makers and migration stakeholders in both the EU and India.

Results of the above activities are made available for public consultation through the website of the project: <http://www.india-eu-migration.eu/>

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Abstract

This study explores factors that initiate and perpetuate low skill labour migration from India to the EU, examines the migration processes and evaluates the policy prescriptions available to manage such migration flows. Based on a survey of the available quantitative and qualitative evidence, our study points to the existence of a fairly stable and persistent demand for low skilled labour in the EU, at least in the medium term. As this demand cannot be fully met from within the EU, there is and will remain a strong demand for low skilled migrant workers from non-EU countries. This offers immense scope for traditional labour sending countries like India as well as destination countries in the EU to strengthen the migration–development nexus. Unfortunately, on both sides, there seems to be an absence of a coherent and focused policy for governing migration of low skilled workers. Considering that migration of low skilled workers from India is mainly directed to the Persian Gulf, the study also makes a comparison between the existing immigration policies in EU countries and the Persian Gulf in order to draw relevant policy perspectives. Evolving appropriate policy response in relation to low skilled migration to Europe is also necessary given that a significant share of such workers end up as irregular migrants in transit or at the destination.

1. Introduction

This paper analyses the dynamics of low skilled labour migration from India to the European Union (EU). Historically, labour migration from India to the EU was primarily directed to the United Kingdom (UK), a phenomenon apparently linked to the colonial ties between the two countries. Of late, new destinations are emerging for Indian labour migrants, particularly countries like Italy, Germany, Poland and Spain. Interestingly, the current labour movement from India to the EU is also marked by the increasing presence of low skilled workers and the emergence of ‘new’ labour outmigration pockets within India. Despite developed countries in the West in general pursuing a restrictive policy on the entry and settlement of migrant workers (Castles, 2004)—more specifically, encouraging the permanent settlement of high skilled migrants and restricting low skilled migrants by allowing them only temporary status—the ground reality of low skilled migration seems to exhibit a contrary picture (Martin, 2011).

Over the years the increased inflow of low skilled workers, both from within and outside the EU, has raised serious concerns among major labour receiving countries in the EU, particularly with respect to their long-term employability, the impact on the labour market and issues with respect to the integration of migrants—such as the fiscal burden related to education and labour market outcomes of their children, among others (OECD, 2008). Available evidence suggests that given the huge unmet demand for migrant workers in developed countries and their excess supply in developing countries, tighter migration policies, ironically, do more harm than good by increasing irregular migration (Hollifield, 2004; Joppke, 1998). This poses an immense challenge for sending countries like India and receiving countries in the EU, given that a significant share of low skilled labour migrants from India ends up as irregular migrants, as there exist very few avenues for this category of workers for regular migration, unlike the case of professionals. At the same time, recent developments, such as the *Europe 2020 Strategy* of the EU, acknowledge the positive role of labour migration in enhancing growth and competitiveness. The positive impact of labour migration, for sending and receiving countries, applies even in the case of low and semi-skilled workers (to the same degree as for skilled labour), as emphasised by the major stakeholders in international migration (IOM, 2008). Such a perspective is of immense significance for India as well as labour receiving countries in the EU to foster better linkages on labour migration and development.

Though the magnitude of low skilled labour migration from India to the EU continues to be small, in comparison with labour flows to the Persian Gulf, emerging trends indicate that countries in the EU could become important destinations for future labour movement from India. Incidentally, labour migration from India to the EU differs from that of India–Gulf migration corridor on several counts—for example, factors that initiate and perpetuate labour flows, roots of migrants and migration routes, to mention a few. However, despite such differences, parallels can also be drawn with respect to the migration cycle and migration policies in these two destinations. Interestingly, in certain occupational categories like health care professionals, migration from India to the EU seems to be interlinked with labour migration from India to the Gulf. However, unlike the case of Indian migration to the Gulf, labour migration to the EU, particularly in the low skilled category, is not adequately addressed in academic literature. This is despite an increase noted in the demand for low skilled workers in most of the EU countries and strong evidence to support the view that a significant share of migrant workers engaged in low skilled occupations in many EU countries are not necessarily ‘low skilled’ (Widmaier and Dumont, 2011). Given such a context, it is crucial to understand the nuances of labour movement in the India–EU migration corridor to improve migration outcomes for India and receiving countries.

Factors operating at multiple levels shape the contemporary flow of low skilled migrant workers from India to the EU. The changing age structure, along with the high educational attainment among the youth and their reluctance to engage in low paying jobs, has created a demand for low skilled workers in a number of European countries (OECD, 2011). On the supply side, India’s ‘demographic

dividend', not complimented by appropriate labour market outcomes, provides the necessary push. Social and religious networks also emerge as an important factor in modulating migratory flows. As evident in the literature, there is a consistent flow of labour migrants from certain regions, religion, communities and occupational categories from India to Europe. An example is the large-scale international migration of health care workers from Christian communities in Kerala, India (Percot and Rajan, 2007). Interestingly, for a significant share of migrant workers from India, developed countries in the West constitute the 'ultimate destination' and for this reason the migratory route from India to the EU may be long for many, both in terms of time and space.

This study explores the demand and supply factors that initiate and perpetuate labour flows in the low skilled category from India to the EU, examines the migration processes and evaluates the policy prescriptions available to manage such migration flows. A comparison is also drawn between the existing immigration policies in EU countries and the Persian Gulf.

1.1. Definitional and Methodological Issues

In the study, low skilled workers are defined to include a cross section of those engaged in low skilled occupations,¹ with low levels of education² and in low pay scales, as these three categories are often linked. Low skilled migrants tend to be predominantly engaged in informal employment, which offers minimum wages with no or limited provision of social security. A high share of low skilled migrant workers tends to fall into the irregular category, either living legally and working illegally or living and working illegally.

This paper primarily relies on a detailed review of existing literature, which is supplemented with data sources such as Eurostat and SOPEMI that provide statistics on international migration. It is important to note that there is no official data³ in India pertaining to the outflow of migrant workers to the EU. As data on low skilled migrants, particularly those in the irregular category, is scanty, we have attempted to bridge the data gap by interacting with various stakeholders involved in facilitating labour migration from India to the EU; these include government officials and policymakers, private agencies/institutions that impart necessary skill for international migration, job recruitment agencies and consultants, education consultants and travel agencies located in New Delhi, Mumbai and Kochi. Detailed interviews were also held with a limited number of prospective, current and return migrants in each of these locations.

The paper is structured as follows. Section 2 analyses trends and patterns of migration from India to the EU. Section 3 narrates the migration cycle of low skilled workers from India to the EU. Section 4 provides policy responses in selected EU countries and India to manage low skill labour migration. To provide a comparative perspective, migration policies in the Persian Gulf countries are also discussed. Section 5 provides certain concluding observations and policy directions.

¹ Include categories like service workers and shop and market sale workers (5); skilled agricultural and fishery workers (6); craft and related trades workers (7); plant and machine operators and assemblers (8); and those in elementary occupations (9), as provided in the International Standard Classification of Occupation (ISCO-88).

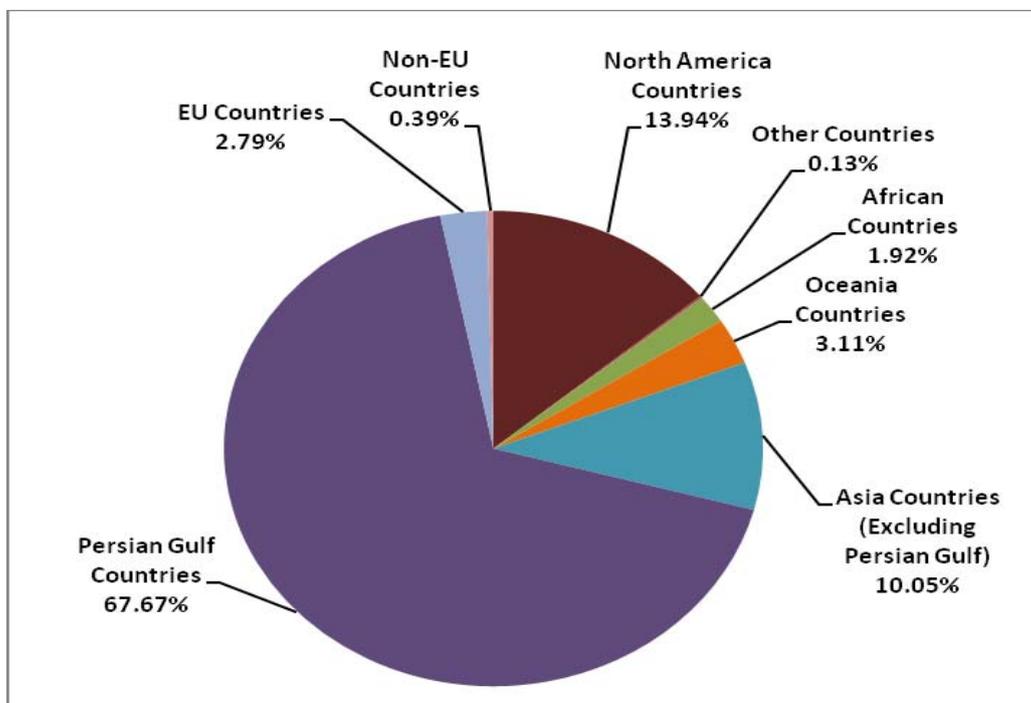
² Include categories like pre primary education (0); primary education or first stage primary education (1); and lower secondary or secondary stage of basic education (2), as provided in the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED-1997). Here we have also included persons with vocational qualifications.

³ Official data on the outflow of workers from India is based on the emigration clearance obtained by those who require it to migrate abroad for overseas employment, under the provisions of the Emigration Act 1983. However, the Emigration Act exempts a number of categories of persons from such clearances. As per the present provisions, those whose educational attainment is below matriculation and those emigrating to certain countries (mainly the Persian Gulf) require such clearances. They are not required for a person emigrating for employment to any of the EU countries.

2. Situating Low Skilled Labour Migration from India to the EU: Trends and Patterns

The trajectory of labour movement from India is at an interesting juncture. The most preferred destinations of Indian emigrants continue to be countries in the Persian Gulf, North American countries and those in Europe (Chart 1). At the same time, the emergence of new destinations, such as Australia, New Zealand and certain countries in East and South East Asia, is reshaping the landscape of migration from India. Apart from an increase noted in the magnitude of labour flows from India and the diversification of the destinations, changes are also visible in the skill composition of migrant workers. For instance, labour migration from India to Gulf countries started as a movement of low skilled workers following the oil boom of the 1970s, while migration to developed countries in the West was associated with that of health care professionals during the 1980s and those working in information technology (IT) during the 1990s. In a significant turnaround, trends towards the end of the first decade of the 21st century indicate an increase in the share of medium and high skilled workers migrating to the Gulf, while labour migration to advanced economies in the West is marked by an increase in the share of low skilled workers.

Chart 1. Migration of Indian Population to Major Regions, 2011



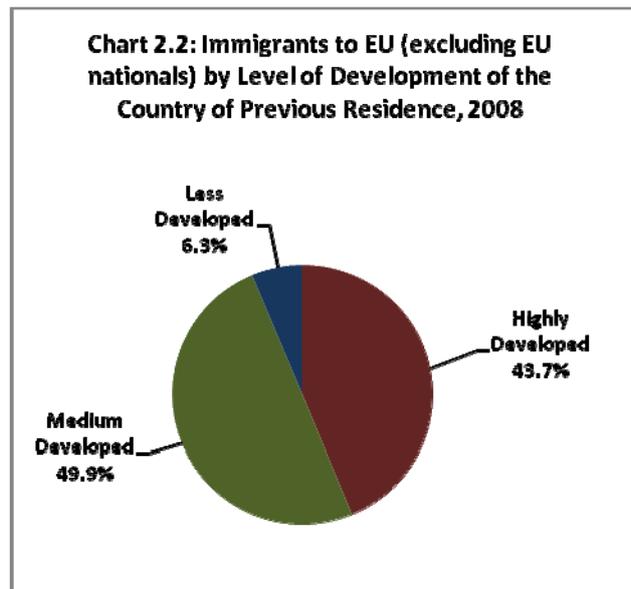
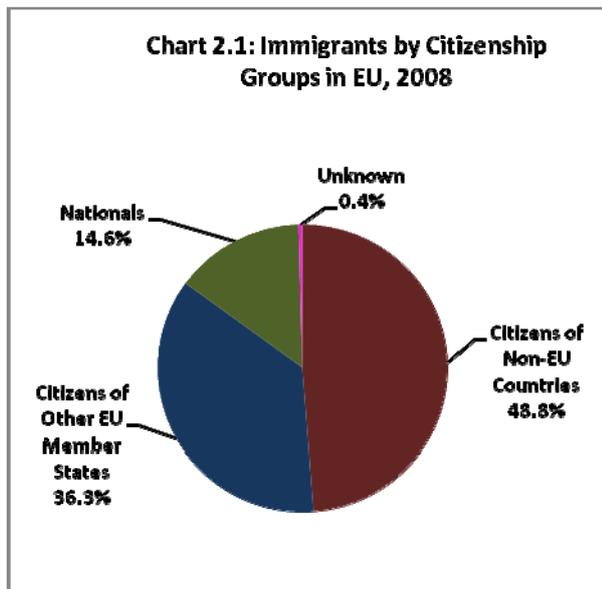
Source: MOIA retrieved from: <http://moia.gov.in/services.aspx?ID1=300&id=m8&idp=59&mainid=23> on 09.04.2012.

Certain factors need to be kept in mind while discussing the migration of low skilled workers from India to the EU, which is emerging as one among various streams of international labour migration from India. First, in many of the EU countries the share of the elderly in the population is high, in contrast to the situation in India which is currently experiencing a 'demographic dividend'. Second, the demand for low skilled workers in the EU is primarily in certain occupations like care for both children and elderly, hospitality services, retail sector, cleaning and maintenance workers and also in agriculture and construction activities (OECD, 2008), sectors that are unattractive to native workers as they neither require high skills nor offer high wages. Further, it needs to be noted that the demand for low skilled workers in many of these sectors is higher than can be fulfilled by increased native workforce participation of the elderly and women, investment of capital equipment or reorganisation of production (ibid.). On the other hand, India has an excess supply of low skilled workers who find wages and working conditions in the EU attractive. Third, as many of the low skilled labour migrants

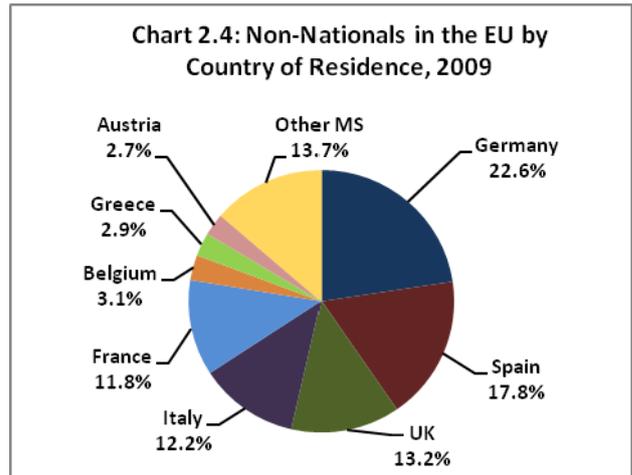
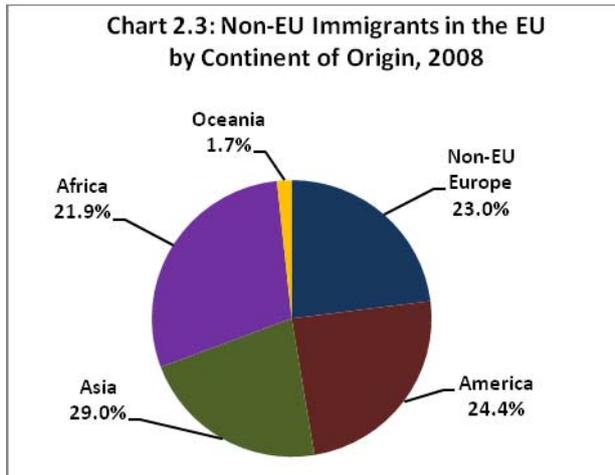
from India to the EU have fewer social and cultural ties in the destination country, say in comparison with the Gulf, and are unfamiliar with immigration rules which are often distinct for each country, the migration process is rendered complex. The picture is further complicated with the increase in the number of agents/consultants involved at each stage of migration, in India, in transit and at the destination. This is perhaps an important reason why low skilled migrants easily come under the influence of agents/consultants to devise ‘new’ routes to reach the EU. As a prelude to tracing the migration process of low skilled workers from India to the EU, the following section provides trends and patterns of migration in this migration corridor.

2.1. Indian Immigrants in the EU

Countries in the EU are witnessing a huge inflow of immigrants, which has not only increased their total population stock—by 1.7 million per year from 2004 to 2008—but has also made the age composition of the population younger (European Commission, 2011). In 2008, immigrants with non-EU citizenship constituted around 49 per cent of the total immigrant population in the EU, while the share of nationals residing in EU countries was merely 15 per cent (Chart 2.1). Interestingly, among the immigrants in the EU, only a minor share—6 per cent—previously resided in less developed countries⁴ (Chart 2.2). In 2008, citizens of Asian countries constituted around one-third of the total immigrants residing in EU countries (Chart 2.3). Morocco (1,57,000), China (97,000) and India (93,000) are the top three countries of origin of immigrants into the EU. Among the immigrants, there seems to be a clear preference regarding destination among the different EU countries. Germany, Spain, UK, Italy and France seem to be the most preferred destinations (Chart 2.4).

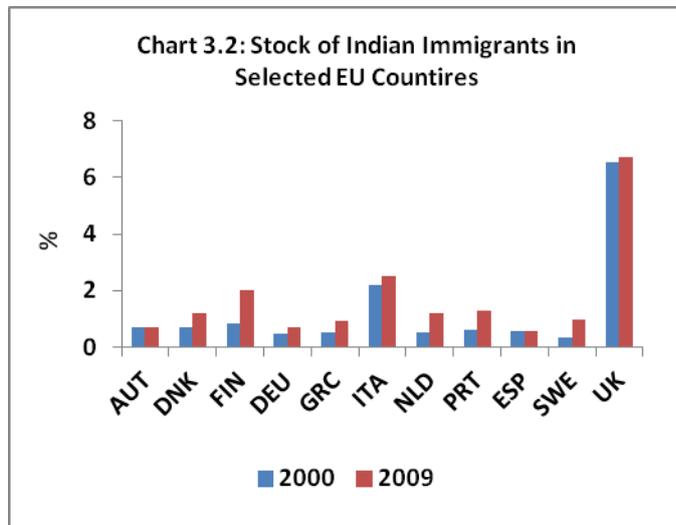
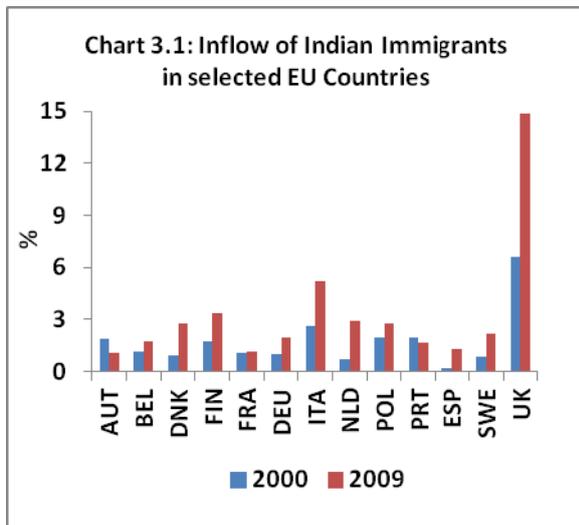


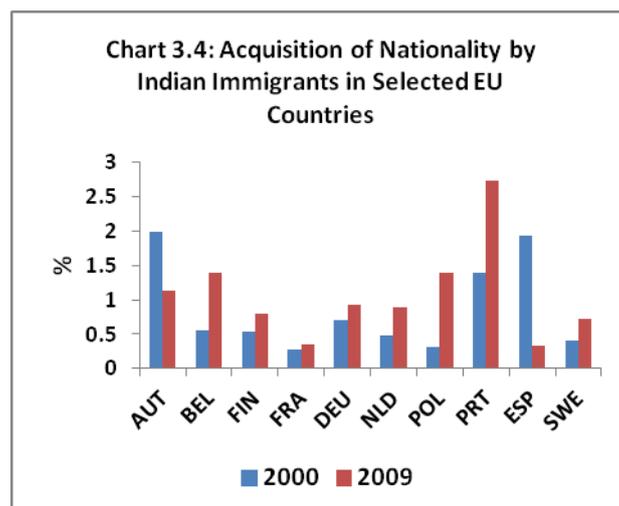
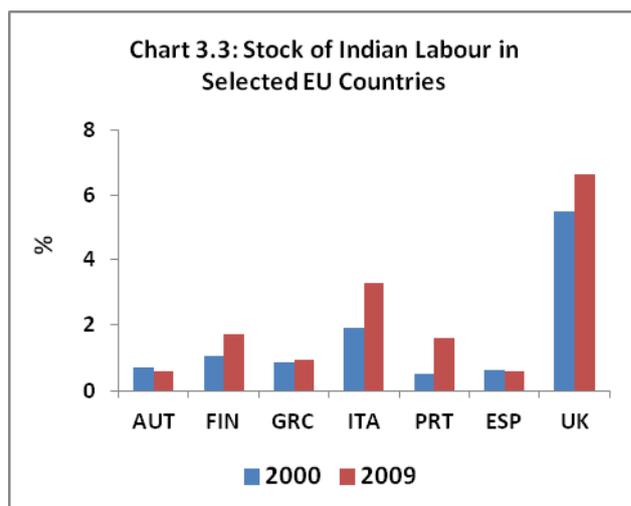
⁴ Countries are categorised on the basis of Human Development Indicators of the UNDP. Accordingly, the total population living in high developed countries is around 22 per cent and in medium developed countries 68 per cent; the remaining reside in less developed countries.



Source: European Commission, 2011.

Migration of Indians to the EU is directed to a few of its member countries. As indicated previously, the UK figures as the top destination for Indian immigrants. Other major destinations for the Indian population include Germany, Italy and Spain. However, a slightly different picture emerges if the share of Indian population is analysed from the perspective of countries in the EU. Apart from the UK, where Indian immigrants constitute around 15 per cent of the total immigrant population, they form a significant share of the total immigrants in Italy, Finland, Netherlands, Poland, Denmark, Sweden and Germany. Interestingly, during 2000 to 2009, the inflow of Indians doubled in the above countries except Poland. Further, the inflow of Indian immigrants to countries like Spain and Belgium witnessed a significant increase (Chart 3.1).





Note:(i) Austria (AUT), Belgium (BEL), Denmark (DNK), Finland (FIN), France (FRA), Germany (DEU), Greece (GRC), Italy (ITA), Netherlands (NLD), Poland (POL), Portugal (PRT), Spain (ESP), Sweden (SWE), United Kingdom (UK).

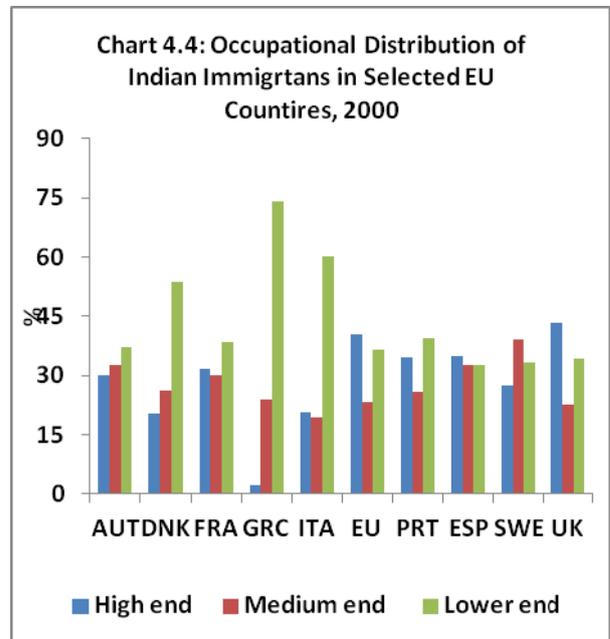
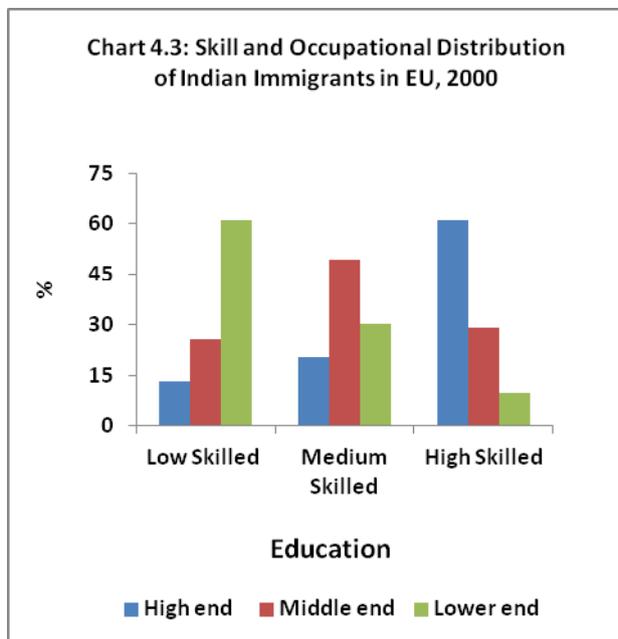
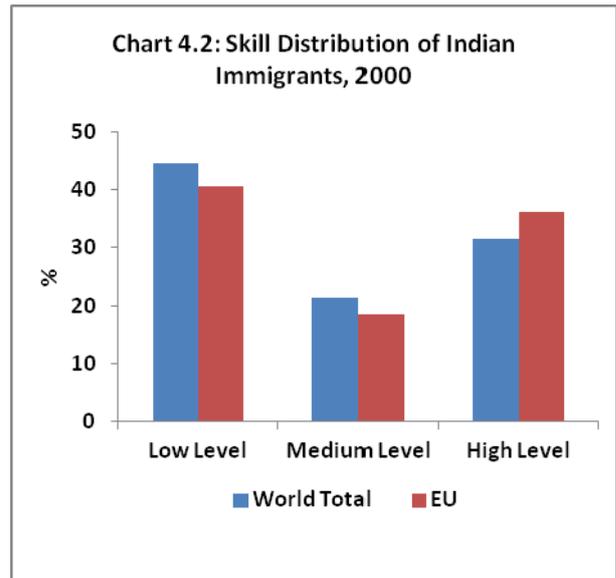
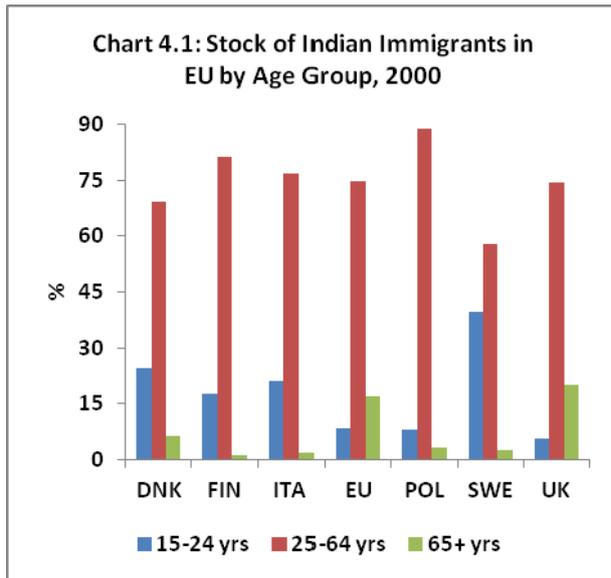
Source: OECD, International Migration Database retrieved from <http://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=MIG> on 12.04.2012.

Obviously, countries that record a high inflow of Indian immigrants also record a higher stock of Indians in the country's foreign population (Chart 3.2). In 2009, the share of Indian workers witnessed a noticeable increase in some of the member countries of EU for which information is available. Indians accounted for 6.7 per cent of foreign workers in the UK and 3.3 per cent in Italy in 2009 (Chart 3.3). Except for Spain, the Indian population in EU member countries displays a strong trend towards acquiring nationality (Chart 3.4).

2.2. Skill and Occupational Profiles of Indian Workers in the EU

As is typical of any immigrant community, those belonging to the age group of 24 to 64 years, or in the most productive category, constitute the major share of the Indian population in the EU countries. Among the major destination countries of Indian immigrants in the EU, the UK and Denmark seem to have a higher share of population in the above 65 years category, perhaps indicating a higher trend of family and permanent migration to these countries (Chart 4.1). The Indian immigrant population to the EU countries also seems to have a higher skill composition in comparison with their counterpart in other parts of the world. A little more than half of the Indian immigrants in EU countries are in the medium or high skilled categories (Chart 4.2).

The picture looks somewhat different if Indian immigrants in the EU are classified according to skills and occupation. Despite better skill composition of Indian immigrants in the EU (as compared to those in other destinations), a significant share of those with medium and high skills are engaged in lower end jobs (Chart 4.3). For instance, the shares of medium skilled and high skilled persons engaged in occupations like 'plant and machine operators and assemblers and elementary occupations' were around 22 per cent and 8 per cent respectively. A comparison of occupational distribution of Indian immigrants in selected EU countries offer interesting insights. Except in the UK, Spain, Portugal, France and Austria, Indian immigrants are disproportionately employed in medium and low-end occupations (Chart 4.4). The share of Indian immigrants engaged in lower end occupations, classified as 'elementary occupations', constitute the majority in countries like Denmark, Italy and Greece.



Note: (i) Austria (AUT), Denmark (DNK), European Union (EU), Finland (FIN), France (FRA), Greece (GRC), Italy (ITA), Poland (POL), Portugal (PRT), Spain (ESP), Sweden (SWE), United Kingdom (UK).

(ii) High-end occupation includes legislators, senior officials and managers and professionals; middle-end occupation includes clerks, service workers, shop and market sales workers and skilled agricultural and fishery workers; and lower end occupation includes craft and related trades workers, plant and machine operators and assemblers and elementary occupations.

Source: European University Institute, retrieved from <http://www.india-eu-migration.eu/database/demographic-and-economic-module/> on 12.04.2012.

However, in certain EU countries, a gradual improvement is noted in the skill composition of Indian immigrants. For instance, the share of high skilled Indian immigrants in the UK increased from 33 per cent in 2000 to 55 per cent in 2005-06 (Widmaier and Dumont, 2011). This is definitely linked to an increase in the demand for immigrant workers in certain sectors like education, health care and professional, scientific and technical activities. At the same time, there are certain service subsectors like residential care activities, domestic services and activities related to agriculture and dairying that

generated significant employment for immigrant workers in the EU during 2008-2010, a period mostly associated with job loss (Table 1).

Table 1. Growth in Employment in Selected Industries in the EU, 2008-10 (in per cent)

<i>Category</i>	<i>Native</i>	<i>Foreign</i>
Education	3.3	8.0
Human Health Activities	2.9	4.3
Residential Care Activities	8.2	33.7
Social Work Activities without Accommodation	5.0	12.4
Other Professional, Scientific and Technical Activities	22.5	53.3
Services to buildings and Landscape Activities	7.0	9.2
Food and Beverage Service Activities	2.4	4.2
Activities of Households as Employers of Domestic Personnel		13.8
Crop and Animal Production, Hunting and related Service Activities		18.9
Accommodation		11.0

Note:(a) Includes European members of the OECD except Switzerland; (b) Data based on European Labour Force Surveys (Eurostat), Q1-Q3 2008 and Q1-Q3 2010.

Source: OECD, 2011.

The European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop) reports a similar trend with respect to the emerging employment situation in the EU. It is estimated that between 2010 and 2020, around 8 million new jobs will be created in the EU. As indicated in Table 2, for the EU as a whole, the demand for low skilled workers is here to stay. This is equally applicable for many of the EU countries under analysis, other than Italy and Poland. Further disaggregated analysis indicates that the increased demand for low skilled workers will be more pronounced in occupations such as shop and market sale workers and for those in elementary occupations and service sector activities.

Table 2. Skill Requirement by Occupational Categories in Selected EU Countries (in per cent)

<i>Country</i>	<i>High Skill</i>			<i>Medium Skill</i>			<i>Low Skill</i>		
	2000	2010	2020	2000	2010	2020	2000	2010	2020
UK	29.3	29.9	28.3	25.8	25.9	27.3	44.9	44.2	44.4
Germany	19.5	21.2	22.0	34.2	34.3	33.8	46.3	44.5	44.3
Poland	21.1	24.7	27.1	18.6	19.4	20.1	60.3	55.9	52.8
Spain	19.5	20.9	20.0	19.8	22.2	24.6	60.7	56.9	55.3
Italy	17.7	18.3	21.2	29.3	33.3	35.6	53.0	48.4	43.3
France	19.9	24.0	26.0	34.5	31.8	29.8	45.5	44.2	44.2
EU	21.1	23.3	24.3	27.2	27.9	28.2	51.7	48.8	47.5

Source: Cedefop retrieved from <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/about-cedefop/projects/forecasting-skill-demand-and-supply/skills-forecasts.aspx> on 24.04.2012.

Sectoral analysis indicates that employment growth is likely to occur in distribution and transport, business and other services and non-marketed services, which are also subsectors with a high demand for migrant workers (Table 3). Yet another sector that offers immense scope for employment generation in the EU is construction, estimated to account for around 7 per cent of the total employment to be generated in 2020. In the case of member countries like Poland, the sector's share in employment is expected to be much higher—around 8.6 per cent.

Table 3. Employment Trends by Industry in Selected EU Countries (in per cent)

<i>Sector</i>	2000	2010	2020
Primary sector and utilities	8.6	6.5	5.1
Manufacturing	18.3	16.1	14.6
Construction	6.9	6.8	6.7
Distribution and transport	25.0	25.9	26.5
Business and other services	19.2	21.5	23.9
Non-marketed services	21.9	23.3	23.2

Source: Cedefop, 2010.

As noted elsewhere, a high share of low skilled workers ends up as irregular migrants, either knowingly or unknowingly. This could arise in a number of ways, such as entering a country illegally, with invalid/false documents or by avoiding border controls. Migrants with non-working visas entering the labour market is a classic case of irregular migration. Even regular migrants may end up in the irregular category when they overstay the legally valid visa period. It is also very likely that irregular migrants do not possess the appropriate qualification to obtain valid entry permits in the destination countries. At the same time an unmet demand exists for such workers, particularly in the informal economy, which can reduce costs by undercutting the remuneration of workers without valid legal papers. It is estimated that in the EU, the share of irregular migrants was in the range of 1.9 to 3.8 million in 2008 (Kovacheva and Vogel, 2009). However, some of the EU countries report a relatively higher presence of irregular migrants. For instance, estimates indicate that nearly 13.41 per cent of third country nationals (TCNs) in the United Kingdom and 10.75 per cent of TCNs in Belgium are apprehended/found to be illegally present in 2009 (Maroukis, 2009; Thorpe, 2009; Wets, 2011). Estimates also indicate the share of irregular Indian migrants is very high in countries like Slovakia—nearly 17.71 per cent of TCNs apprehended/found to be illegally present in 2007 (Divinský, 2008).

3. Unravelling the Migration Cycle

Indian immigrants in the EU are heterogeneous, with varied socio-economic and demographic characteristics and places of origin, and had adopted distinct routes to reach the destinations. It is often assumed that migration of Indian workers to developed countries in the West is overwhelmingly dominated by high skilled workers and that to the Gulf countries by low skilled workers. However, the available data does not support any such dichotomous distinction between destination and skills; on the contrary it indicates increased diversification of migration flows both in terms of characteristics of migrants and destinations. It is in this context that one needs to locate the migration process of low skilled workers from India to the EU.

3.1. Roots of Migrants and Migration Routes

In comparison with Gulf countries, institutional structures to facilitate the migration of low skilled workers from India to the EU are rather limited. For a prospective low skilled migrant, there exists no system that provides adequate and appropriate information on formalities and procedures to be followed. This is, perhaps, an important reason for the increase in irregular migrants, as middlemen and recruiting agents have the upper hand in controlling the migration cycle. Given that economic consideration emerges as the prominent factor determining the migration of low skilled workers, say, in comparison with that of high skilled (Thapan and Deka, 2010), they become easy victims to those providing incorrect information. Apart from the economic motive, other factors like career advancement, better working conditions, prospects for permanent settlement, high standards of living and symbolic benefits like ‘prestige’ make the EU a favourable destination for Indian immigrants, in comparison with Gulf countries (Percot and Rajan, 2007).

Social networks play a crucial role in initiating and perpetuating migratory flows. This is an important factor behind certain regions in India having a higher share of workers in EU countries. For instance, there seems to be a systematic flow of low skilled workers from the Indian states of Punjab and Kerala (Lum, 2012). However, a recent study reports increasing low skilled labour migration from new destination centres like Haryana and Rajasthan (Thapan, 2011). Interesting variations in gender roles are also noted among Indian immigrants in the EU. For instance, in Italy labour migration from Punjab is led by males, while the opposite seems to be the case with Kerala. Such transnational migration of women has influenced gender relations, depending on the economic role played by women at the destination. In Italy, women from Kerala working as home care providers and domestic workers exhibit gender empowerment, while females accompanying their male partners, as in the case of Punjabis, adhere to traditional gender roles. Religious networks play an important role in providing information to facilitate migration: *gurdwaras* in the case of Sikhs from Punjab and the church for those from Kerala. Personal and kinship networks with current and returned migrants provide information on job prospects in EU countries (Sasikumar, 2008).

Though the EU could be an ultimate destination⁵ for many migrants, some may regard it as a transit stop. For instance, the Punjabi migrants regard their stay in Greece and West Germany as a ‘springboard’ for migration to the USA and Canada (Judge, 2002).

An interesting aspect of the migration process is the ways and means used by migrants to enter their preferred destinations in the EU. Despite several restrictive policies followed by the EU to limit low skilled workers’ migration to short term/temporary status, migrants adopt various strategies to enter and then to extend their duration of stay at the destination. As noted by Sasikumar (2008), for construction workers entry could occur via recruiting agencies in the EU contacting workers through their agents in India, either for a specific project or to meet the independent demand for workers from different firms, while labour demand in the hospitality sector is met by job advertisements placed in leading newspapers in India or campus recruitment from various hotel management institutions.

A major problem faced by prospective low skilled migrants to the EU is the need to obtain formal qualifications, adequate job experience and working knowledge of English—conditions that often make the migration of Indian workers difficult. Limited fieldwork conducted in Kerala indicates that to overcome such obstacles, student migration to the EU is promoted as a strategy. Education consultants help students migrate to the EU, with the promise that they can enter the labour market as part-time workers during the course of their study and avail of a decent job and settle permanently

⁵ Health care workers exhibit a strong preference for the EU as a migration destination for obvious reasons. In comparison to the USA, procedural delays involved in migration to the EU may be shorter (Percot and Rajan, 2007), while in certain cases, it could be the cultural environment that motivates migration, say the prospect of practicing their religion, or of escaping restrictions on movement and even their choice of dress, as noted in the case of Gulf countries (Alonso-Garbayo and Maben, 2009).

after completing their course. A significant share of students is enrolled in polytechnics that offer diplomas in electrical work, horticulture and hotel management. Part-time jobs available for the migrant students are low skilled, and in many cases they are forced to continue in the low skilled work, as they fail to complete the course or the education institution turns out to be without adequate recognition. This stream of student migration from India, essentially to pursue certificate and diploma courses, often done without adequate checks and balances, perpetuates low skilled migration and may lead to irregular migration. However, this being a recent form of labour migration, we do not have enough supporting evidences.

The extent and process of irregular labour migration from India to the EU has been the subject of a small number of studies. Notable among them are studies conducted by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes (UNODC) (2009a and 2009b) that explored the issue in the context of migration from Tamil Nadu, Punjab and Haryana. Results indicate that irregular migration occurs through well-established networks of travel or recruiting agents and through personal networks. Within Punjab a high share of irregular migration is noted from Jalandhar, Kapurthala, Nawanshahr and Hoshiarpur; in Harayana from Ambala, Karnal, Kurukshetra and Kaithal; in Tamil Nadu from Thanjavur, Thiruvavur and Pudukkottai; and in Andhra Pradesh from the coastal districts of East Godavari, West Godavari, Vishakhapatnam and Karim Nagar. Around 90 per cent of irregular migrants were males, with a rural agricultural background, who were not interested in pursuing farming or in higher studies. Among the various destinations in the EU, the UK seems to be most preferred among irregular migrants, followed by Austria, Greece, Sweden, Italy, Spain, Germany, Ireland, Poland and France. The study also notes that in many cases irregular migration to the UK occurs via France. Other popular transit countries include Portugal, Poland, Czech Republic and Hungary, as it is reportedly easier for the agents to arrange visas to these countries.

Several factors, both in India and the destination countries, facilitate/restrict the mobility of workers. They not only provide 'entry', but many a time play an important role in the reintegration of migrants at the destinations. The role of social networks in migration decisions has been touched upon above. The ethnic, religious and caste groups of the migrants are significant factors in the migration processes and outcomes. In the case of the Punjabi community living in Birmingham and Leamington Spa, England, caste groups facilitate migration (Judge, 2002). In Italy Punjabis introduce their caste members as relatives, thereby providing 'guarantee' to the employers. For recent immigrants, their ethnic/caste/family affiliations act as social capital for professional mobility and intensify their ethnic segregation, while for the employer such 'guarantees' are an effective means of obtaining recruits at a lower cost. In certain cases, social networks or grouping around sectarian lines may extend even to linguistic or national lines, 'bonding' and 'bridging' according to the specific context (Chatterji, 2007). A similar role is also played by religious networks. Apart from this, NGOs, trade unions, industry organisations and recruiting agents also play an important role in facilitating migration. For the low skilled migrant workers, social and cultural networks also come handy for secure accommodation as the native population is sceptical about renting out houses to migrants. They disapprove of several migrant workers sharing a studio apartment and in such cases religion comes in handy, as noted in the case of Muslims in Paris (Chatterji, 2007).

For irregular migrants the situation could be slightly different, if migration is modulated by recruiting agents. In such cases, it is often the agents who decide suitable destinations and safe migration routes (UNODC, 2009a and 2009b). Despite strict enforcement of rules, both in India and the EU, anecdotal evidence indicates increasing trends in irregular migration. Recruitment agents reported demand far above what they can handle, as they only take up a few cases each year to avoid suspicion. Informed discussions revealed that agents charge between ` 8,00,000 to ` 14,00,000 (US\$ 16,000 to US\$ 28,000) for immigration to a European country. For the UK the fees were even higher—` 10, 00,000 to ` 15,00,000 (US\$ 20,000 to US\$ 30,000). For the USA and Canada the price charged was ` 25,00,000 (US\$ 50,000) and for a country in the Middle East or South East Asia the

price varied between ` 60,000 to `1,00,000 (US\$ 1,200 to US\$ 2,000). If the migration attempt fails, either the money is returned or the prospective migrant is offered a second attempt.

3.2. Working and Living Conditions

In most of the EU countries low skilled migrant workers are engaged in activities which are unattractive to native workers or for which the native workforce demands higher wages. It does not come as a surprise that migrant workers usually receive low pay and face discrimination in the workplace (Wright and Pollert, 2005).

In certain cases, high skilled migrant workers are ready to accept a low skilled occupation to enter a preferred destination, as noted in the case of the UK (Salt, 2004). In Italy, the majority of low skilled workers from Punjab are engaged in dairy farming, agriculture and slaughterhouses for pigs or as mechanics in small factories (Thapan, 2011). In most cases native youths are unwilling to work 'hard and unpleasant jobs' though it may not be less remunerative (Reyneri, 2001). For the low skilled migrant women from India, the major avenues for employment in Italy are factories, laundries, small boutiques and shops (Thapan, 2011). A significant share of women workers from Kerala are also engaged as domestic workers and home care providers for the elderly (Lum, 2012). In the case of home care providers it is quite possible that many of them do not fall in the low skilled category; they may be continuing in the present job as they do not have the legal status to work or till they get a better job.

In many cases the discrimination/inequity arises from the nature of the occupations. Certain occupations seem to have a high share of Indian workers. For instance, the share of Indians among hotel and restaurant sector workers is 5.3 per cent in London and 2.2 per cent in West Midlands (Wright and Pollert, 2005). In Paris, apart from the restaurant sector, Indian workers are engaged as telephone card sellers, in bookshops and cheap hairstyling salons for men (Chatterji, 2007). As many of these activities tend to engage workers in the irregular category, they are under constant monitoring of the authorities; this is particularly true of the restaurant sector. Yet another sector that engages a significant share of migrant workers is construction. For instance, the UK faced a severe labour shortage with the outflow of Irish workers, leading to a demand for workers from Asia and also from Central and Eastern Europe (Dainty et al, 2007). However, such labour shortage/demand does not seem to translate to better working conditions for migrant workers. In several instances, migrant workers were paid less than promised wages and in certain cases deductions were made from their salaries for travel, housing and food. In 2003, Indians working as stonemasons in Bedford, the UK, were reported to have been paid less than a pound an hour and in yet another case in West London, wages received by Indian construction workers were below the statutory minimum wage (Lillie and Greer, 2007). A study by Anderson and Rogaly (2005) found that around 22 per cent of the migrant workers in the construction sector were irregular residents, who face even worse employment conditions. A study by Fitzgerald (2006), for example, found that migrant construction workers in north-eastern UK did not receive wage slips, and were paid at rates below those negotiated by the Union of Construction, Allied Traders and Technicians (UCATT). In many cases construction workers complained of not having sick pay or holiday pay (Anderson and Rogaly, 2005).

Petty enterprises often prefer migrants in the irregular category for obvious reasons—to get away with paying low remuneration, and avoid complex and time consuming procedures to obtain necessary permits; in some cases the activities of such enterprises themselves may be illegal. Studies indicate that employers are well aware of trade-offs that migrants make to obtain a job at the destination. In most cases the nature of work and working conditions at the destinations are unacceptable for the native workers, though from the migrants' perspective it may be better than their countries of origin. Such cases are noted in the UK in several activities like construction, agriculture, food processing and hospitality (Anderson et al., 2006; Scott, 2008; Geddes, 2008; Lucas and Mansfield, 2008). Even for workers engaged in lower occupational categories but with medium level educational qualifications, the situation is scarcely different. In the context of the migration of health care workers, many

migrants fail the necessary test to work as nurses at the destinations, and are engaged as nursing aides (Gill, 2011). A significant share of them is engaged in home-based geriatric care or in old age homes ‘informally’; these occupations are unattractive to native workers. Such instances are reported from Germany and the UK (Habermann and Stage, 2010).

4. Policies on Low Skilled Labour Migration

This section examines policies to manage low skilled labour migration adopted by selected countries in the EU (UK, Germany, Italy, Poland and Spain) and analyses their implications for the mobility of labour from sending countries like India. To provide a comparative perspective, the immigration policies of Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries that host a significant number of Indian immigrants in the low skilled category are also presented. Such a comparison would provide insights towards evolving a framework to facilitate and manage low skill labour migration from India.

Over the years, the migration policies of EU and its member countries have undergone significant changes. However, even today, EU countries continue to follow differing policies to manage high and low skilled workers. Immigration policies of most EU countries explicitly mention the provision to control and regulate migration of low skilled workers. This arises from a perception of negative impacts of such labour flows on their labour market and on their social security system. This perspective dominates the policy discourses on immigration of the EU countries despite explicit acknowledgement of the fact that ‘considering the economic and demographic situation zero migration policies of the past 30 years are no longer appropriate’ (EC, 2000). The policy documents further reiterate the need for opening up of the labour market to TCNs after adoption of necessary provisions to check irregular migration.

Recent efforts of the EU to build up a consensus on labour migration can be traced to the Treaty of Amsterdam that came into force in 1999. However, the proposal by the EU in 2001 to formulate a general directive on the management of labour migration for its member countries failed to find an agreement in the European Council. In 2004, the EU re-launched the debate on the need to have a common rule on labour migration in the ‘Green Paper on an EU Approach to Managing Economic Migration’ presented in 2004 (EC, 2004). The paper highlighted the need for the EU to have a ‘progressive development of a coherent community immigration policy’ and to address the interests of all parties involved—migrants, the sending and receiving countries’. Nevertheless, during the consultation that followed, member states expressed their support of a policy favouring the migration of high skilled workers. The Commission’s ‘Policy Plan on Legal Migration’ laid down a road map detailing legislative initiatives that need to be adopted by the end of 2009 (EC, 2005). The Plan was able to generate some accord on social and legal rights granted to economic migrants in the EU. However, the member states were free to set conditions of entry and limit to the inflow of workers, currently driven by bilateral agreements between labour sending and receiving countries. An important criticism of the Plan is regarding its ambiguity on how to address the mismatch between labour demand and supply, particularly of low skilled workers. Though it mentions the case of seasonal workers, the extent to which this category can meet the medium- and long-term labour needs of the EU is questionable. As noted by Castles (2006), the Plan fails to provide a feasible solution for the EU’s future needs. Moreover, member countries of the EU follow a ‘preference principle’ in the hiring process—preference accorded to nationals, nationals from EU member countries and then to TCNs, in that order. Ironically, far from relaxation of migration regulations, the last two years witnessed the adoption of even more restrictive immigration policies following the global economic crisis, with soaring unemployment rates and labour market recession in many EU countries (ILO, 2011). All this translates to increased restrictions on the movement of TCNs, particularly low skilled workers, to the EU.

Though there have been attempts to evolve a common framework on migration policies within the EU countries, specificities especially in relation to admission of low skilled migrant workers vary from country to country, particularly in admissions and residence procedures and rights of migrant

workers. This is evident if we look at the major features of the policies on the migration of unskilled and low skilled workers (ULSWs) being currently followed in selected countries like UK, Germany, Italy, Poland and Spain (Appendix Table 1).

Migration policies followed in the EU present both similarities and distinctions with those of GCC countries. It needs to be noted that factors that caused and perpetuated the flow of labour migration to the Gulf countries were quite distinct from those associated with Indian labour migration to the EU. As mentioned earlier, the oil boom of the 1970s and the corresponding demand for low skilled workers in the Gulf were the main factors behind the inflow of Indian migrant workers. The initial demand for low skilled workers in the Gulf was not linked to demographic change, as is the case in the EU, but was due to the low labour force participation of the native population. However, over the years labour flows from India to the Gulf have diversified to accommodate even medium and high skilled workers, to meet changes in the economic structure, which is currently driven by the service sector. The pattern of labour migration from India to EU is the exact opposite: it began with high skilled labour migration and has gradually shifted to low skilled labour migration in the last few years, again as a response to the emerging labour requirements in the EU. Differences in the migration policies between the EU and the GCC countries also account for the variation in strategies adopted by migrants to reach their destination. For instance, student migration seems to be an important strategy followed by low skilled labour migrants to reach their destination in the EU, which is generally not observed in the case of labour migration to the Gulf.

Immigration policies in the Gulf and the EU primarily allow the entry of low skilled workers as temporary settlers, though the duration of stay may be longer in the case of the Gulf. Entry of a low skilled worker from any third world country to the EU is contingent upon the job offer and hence is essentially employer driven, as in the case of Gulf countries. For instance, in Poland and Germany, the work permit binds the worker to a particular employer. But in the case of Spain the work permit is not tied to an employer, but to a specific sector and geographical region. The upper hand provided to the employer may force the worker to remain in an exploitative employment situation, and even obstruct the migrant's right to access dispute resolution mechanisms (OSCE, IOM and ILO, 2007). The work permit system prevalent in the EU has similarities with the sponsorship system (*kafala*) employed in the Gulf to meet the demand for workers and retain them as temporary migrants. This arrangement not only restricts the rights of migrant workers, but has also promoted visa trading and irregular migration in the Gulf (Kapiszewski, 2006; Shaham, 2009). However, considering the increasing incidents of violence reported against migrant workers, particularly in the low skilled category, countries like Kuwait and Bahrain have initiated steps to reform *kafala* (Timothy and Sasikumar, 2012). Restrictions imposed on the deployment of low skilled workers (despite the large unmet demand for them), in both the EU and the Gulf, make things difficult for the employer. Given that the process of recruitment of low skilled migrant workers, who are mostly employed for a short duration, is long and expensive, employers often resort to hiring irregular migrants. Ironically, when the authorities resort to more stringent measures to control the irregular employment of migrants, it merely pushes workers into more precarious jobs, tightening further their web of vulnerability. A more suitable prescription would be to develop a formalised system to manage the flow of low skilled workers.

The migration policy of EU countries concerning low skilled labour migrants indicates a clear preference for nationals from its member countries or those from its poor neighbouring countries over non-European workers. This is primarily the result of bilateral agreements signed between the receiving and sending countries in the EU. In the case of the UK, there is no provision to employ ULSWs from any third world countries. One reason for restriction of the flow of workers is the obligation to provide preferential treatment for low skilled workers from labour-surplus countries in Europe. Schemes previously open for TCNs like Seasonal Agricultural Workers Scheme (SAWS) and sector-based scheme (SBS) for food processing are currently reserved for Bulgarian and Romanian nationals, which joined the EU in 2004 and 2007. The point-based system in the UK set up in 2008 to regulate labour and student migration includes Tier 3 specifying a 'limited number of low skilled

workers needed to fill specific skill shortages’, which is currently on hold. In fact, more stringent restrictions on student migration have recently been announced, more specifically on allowing students to engage in work after the period of study.

In most of the EU countries under consideration, a labour market assessment is performed before permission is granted to recruit low skilled migrant workers. In countries like Germany, the labour market test is followed by prescription of a quota on the number of workers that could be recruited in each category. Similar is the case of Italy where, after the labour market test, a ‘Quota Decree’ is issued annually by the Council of Ministers, where the recruitment of low and medium skilled TCN workers is specified in terms of region, type of work, job category and nationality. However, in the case of Spain, the labour market test is required only to employ workers in jobs not included in the ‘Catalogue of Difficult to Cover Occupations’.

All the GCC member countries have initiated steps for nationalisation, to reduce the share of immigrants in population and labour force with varying degrees of effectiveness. Though nationalisation policies were initiated in the early 1980s, the last few years have seen an increasing intensity in the implementation of such policies. This can partly be attributed to the global economic slowdown. The role of factors such as the demographic changes occurring in most of the Gulf countries and the increase in the numbers of educated young native people entering the labour market cannot be denied. Some nationalisation strategies adopted by the Gulf countries include: restricting the entry of migrants in certain sectors; prescribing quotas on the employment of non-natives; reserving the major share of public sector jobs for nationals; strict implementation of immigration rules; increasing the skill levels of native workers; and increasing the cost of hiring and living of foreign workers (Shah, 2008). From viewing labour flow as a satisfactory/too low in 1976, all Gulf countries except Bahrain have found the migration levels to be too high and have initiated policies to lower it by 2009 (Table 4).

Table 4. Immigration Policies of GCC Countries

Country	1976		2009	
	View	Policy	View	Policy
Bahrain	Satisfactory	Maintain	Satisfactory	Maintain
Kuwait	Satisfactory	Maintain	Too High	Lower
Oman	Satisfactory	Maintain	Satisfactory	Maintain
Qatar	Satisfactory	Maintain	Too High	Lower
Saudi Arabia	Too Low	Raise	Too High	Lower
UAE	Satisfactory	Maintain	Too High	Lower

Source: United Nations, 2010.

It is often perceived that wages and working conditions in EU countries are much better than those offered in the Gulf. Over the years, the wage rates for low skill occupations have stagnated in the Gulf and for a low skilled migrant worker from high migration prevalence regions in India, say, Kerala, wages in the Gulf are increasingly less attractive. In the EU even minimum wages would be higher in comparison with the average in India or even in the Gulf, as they are either determined by the State or through collective bargaining. In most of the EU countries under consideration, low skilled migrant workers are guaranteed non-discrimination vis-à-vis native workers. While in Poland and Italy the rights of workers are not dependent on skill levels, in countries like UK and Spain, the skill of the workers is considered while examining, for example, their right for family reunification.

5. In Lieu of a Conclusion

Based on a survey of the available quantitative and qualitative evidence, our study points to the existence of a fairly stable and persistent demand for low skilled labour in the EU, at least in the medium term. The long-term prospects for such demand are indicated by the changing demographic profile of EU countries, increasing ageing of the workforce and rapid growth of work in the care and personal service sector. Due to various reasons, this demand cannot be fully met from within the EU and thus there is and will remain a strong demand for low skilled migrant workers from non-EU countries. This offers immense scope for traditional labour sending economies like India as well as destination countries in the EU to strengthen the migration–development nexus. Unfortunately, there seems to be an absence on both sides of a coherent and focused policy for formalised management of low skilled labour migration. Such a policy course is also necessary given that a significant share of low skilled workers end up as irregular migrants in transit or at the destination.

Labour migration to the EU has always remained outside the migration policy framework in India because until some years ago, high skilled workers accounted for the major share of labour flows in the India–EU migration stream. High skilled workers, it was assumed till recently, needed no special intervention on the part of the Government. However, considering the increasing temporarisation of high skill migrants in western countries and stringent restrictions on the entry and work of migrants in the Gulf, India needs to develop a focused migration policy to diversify and better manage its labour outflows. For instance, the country needs to develop labour market information systems to assess present and future labour demand requirements in the major receiving countries in the EU with respect to industries, regions and skills. Correspondingly India should adopt initiatives to develop/upgrade existing skills to suit labour demands in destination countries and formulate a skill recognition framework (for skills acquired through formal and informal channels) consonant with EU standards. Yet another crucial drawback that hinders policy formulation in India is the lack of reliable data to monitor the outflow of low skilled labour migration to EU, as is available in the case of labour migration from India to Gulf. Correspondingly, efforts should be made to develop a well-crafted pre-departure orientation programme for low skilled migrants from India to the EU, which would make their migration safe. Formalisation processes can be strengthened if well-designed bilateral agreements with major labour receiving countries in the EU are devised keeping in mind the special needs of labour migrants from India and calibrated according to the needs of the receiving countries. These measures will reduce the dependence of the migrants on the ‘informal’ and exploitative labour market institutions of agents and traffickers.

On the part of major labour receiving countries in the EU, there needs to be better cooperation to address issues concerning low skilled labour migrants. Secondly, there is a need to get out of the state of denial in which much of the migration policy for low skilled labour is at present mired. While immigration is a sensitive political issue it is necessary for these countries, first, to accept the medium- and long-term need for low skilled labour immigration from non-EU countries. It would also help to make the recruitment of low skilled workers from non-EU countries less cumbersome and provide them some form of social security.

It is ironical that more of such cooperation is taking place in the case of high skill migrants. In the coming years, management of low skilled migrants will become a critical issue in the EU. The absence of an appropriate system to manage demand and supply of low skilled workers will aggravate the irregular migration situation. Therefore, from the perspective of both India and the EU, better cooperation should be sought towards effective management of the migration of low skilled workers.

Appendix Table 1

Admission and Residence Formalities for Third Country ULSWs in the EU

<i>Country</i>	<i>Broad Parameters</i>
UK	<p>Legal Framework No specific regulation regarding third country ULSWs. Tier 3 of the point based system (PBS) set up in 2008, which regulates migration of low skilled third country nationals (TCNs), is presently on hold.</p> <p>Specific Schemes Currently there is no specific programme for TCNs. It is anticipated that the Tier 3 system will be quota based and subject to a labour market test when it is activated.</p> <p>Conditions to Admittance for Work 'Certificate of Sponsorship' issued by the employer is required to get a migration permit under PBS.</p> <p>Rights of Workers Rights of TCNs depend on their skill levels. Under SAWS and SBS workers have no right for family reunification and permanent residence status.</p>
Germany	<p>Legal Framework The Residence Act of 2004 applies to the entry and residence of all TCNs, including seasonal workers, fairground workers and au pairs.</p> <p>Specific Schemes Bilateral agreements regulate employment of contract workers. Following labour market test, quotas will be defined for TCNs. Further, employment of contract workers is restricted in districts which record high unemployment rates.</p> <p>Conditions to Admittance for Work To apply for residence and employment permits, TCNs are required to submit an employment contract or a promise of employment with a German employer and proof of medical insurance. The maximum duration for which visas are issued for au pair worker is one year, for seasonal workers 6 months, for fairground workers 9 months and for contract workers for up to 2 years.</p> <p>Rights of Workers Except for au pair workers limited options are available to change employers during the contract period. Though there exist guarantees against discrimination, there is no access to social security, vocational training, etc.</p>
Italy	<p>Legal Framework Regulated by Unified Immigration Text of 2002.</p> <p>Specific Schemes There exist bilateral agreements to recruit seasonal workers. Quotas for seasonal workers are set in the 'Quota Decree' on the basis of labour market tests. Earlier Italy had a scheme to regularise irregular migrants, for example, domestic workers in 2009.</p> <p>Conditions to Admittance for Work Residence and work permits are issued simultaneously. For contracts of limited duration the period cannot exceed 1 year and for contracts of unlimited duration the limit is 2 years. Permits for seasonal workers are issued for a period ranging from 20 days to 9 months. There is also a provision to issue multiple-entry permits.</p> <p>Rights of Workers Rights are not dependent on skill levels. Residence permits give rights to social assistance at par with nationals.</p>

Poland	<p>Legal Framework Apart from the general provisions concerning work permits the Act on Aliens of 2003 apply to all TCNs, including ULSWs.</p> <p>Specific Schemes Depend on bilateral contracts. A labour market test applies for all TCNs except for certain countries bordering Poland and countries within the EU mobility partnership.</p> <p>Conditions to Admittance for Work Residence permits and work permits are 2 separate documents. The former is issued for a maximum period of 3 years and latter for a maximum period of 2 years.</p> <p>Rights of Workers Right do not depend on the skill levels of workers. Work permits bind the holder to the particular employer and to particular work.</p>
Spain	<p>Legal Framework Other than the general immigration law there is no specific regulation for ULSWs from non-EU countries.</p> <p>Specific Schemes Labour market test is followed with a quota system, disaggregated by skills and regions, except for jobs listed in the Catalogue of Difficult to Cover Occupations. Initial permits are issued for 1 year, which can be renewed to a maximum of 4 years. Employment of TCNs is based on the bilateral agreements carried out between the State authorities in both countries and not through individual employers.</p> <p>Conditions to Admittance for Work Employers are obliged to pay social security for TCNs. In the case of temporary workers, employers are obliged to provide housing and return tickets, and make sure the workers leave the country after expiry of their contracts.</p> <p>Rights of Workers Rights are linked to skill levels, except for family reunification. Employment visas are tied to a specific sector and geographical region and not to the individual employer.</p>

Source: Bureau of European Policy Advisors (BEPA) 2010; OECD, 2008 and 2011.

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