

# COVID-19 AND MIGRATION IN THE MEDITERRANEAN REGION

CMI-WB FLAGSHIP ON MEDITERRANEAN MIGRATION

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# Outline of the Presentation

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1. How was Mediterranean migration affected following the COVID-19 outbreak?
2. What do we know about implications for receiving countries?
3. What do we know about the impacts of the crisis on migrants and their families?
4. How can migration policies alleviate some of these tensions?

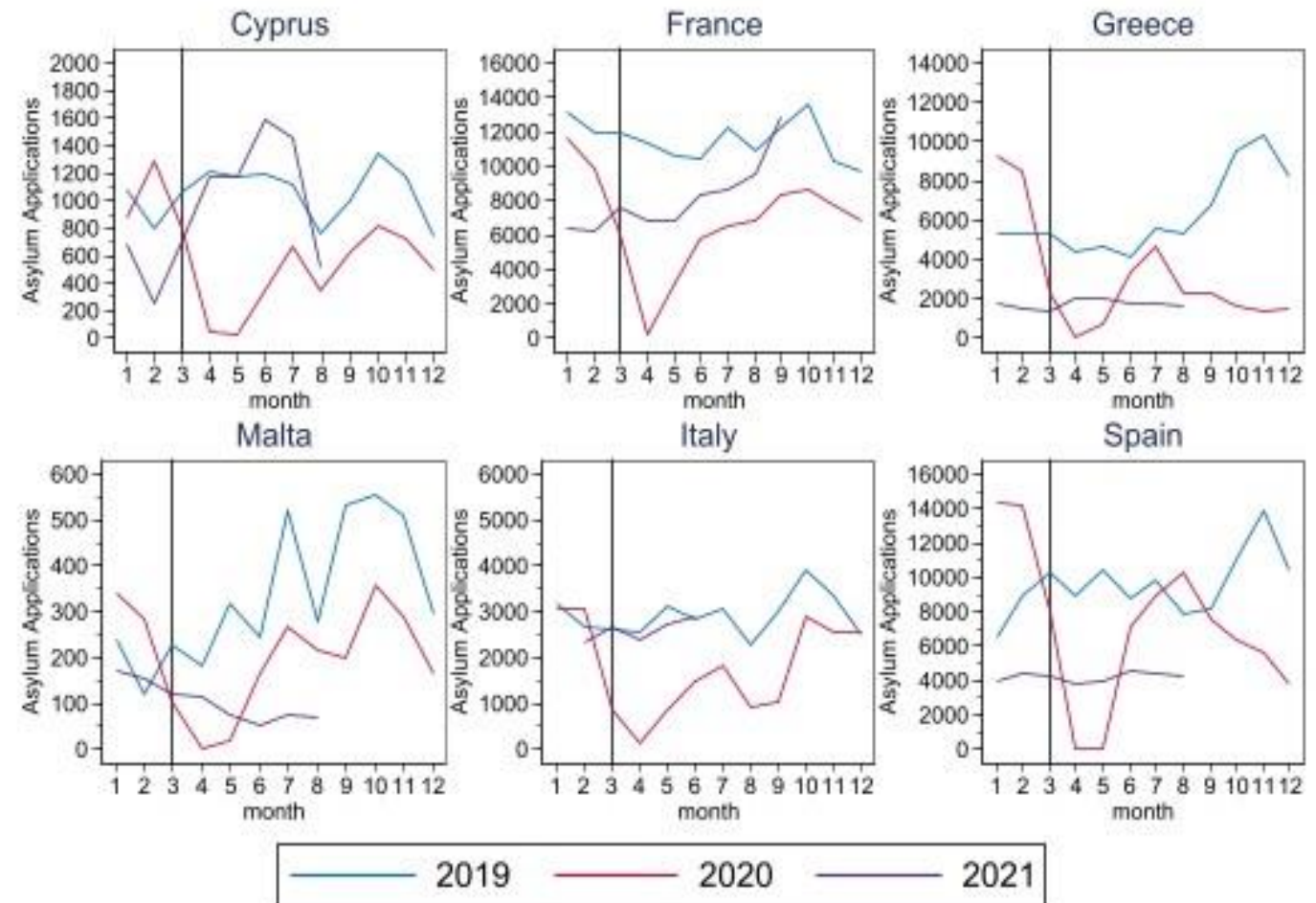


**How was Mediterranean migration affected following the COVID-19 outbreak?**

# Both voluntary and forced migration flows have been affected by the mobility restrictions during the pandemic

- Large drop in first-instance asylum applications in Cyprus, France, Greece, Italy, Malta and Spain for most of 2020. Only in Italy and Cyprus numbers returned to 2019 levels during 2021
- In 2020, inflows of permanent migrants decreased significantly in France (-21%), Spain (-38%), and Italy (-35%) compared to 2019 (OECD, 2021).
- In KSA, number of work visas in Q1-Q2 2020 was 31% lower, and in Q3-Q4 2020 91% lower than in 2019 (OECD, ILO, UNHCR, and IOM, 2020).
- Inflow of seasonal workers dropped by 57% in Italy in 2020 but increased by 2% in France. Overall drop in the whole OECD was “only” 9%

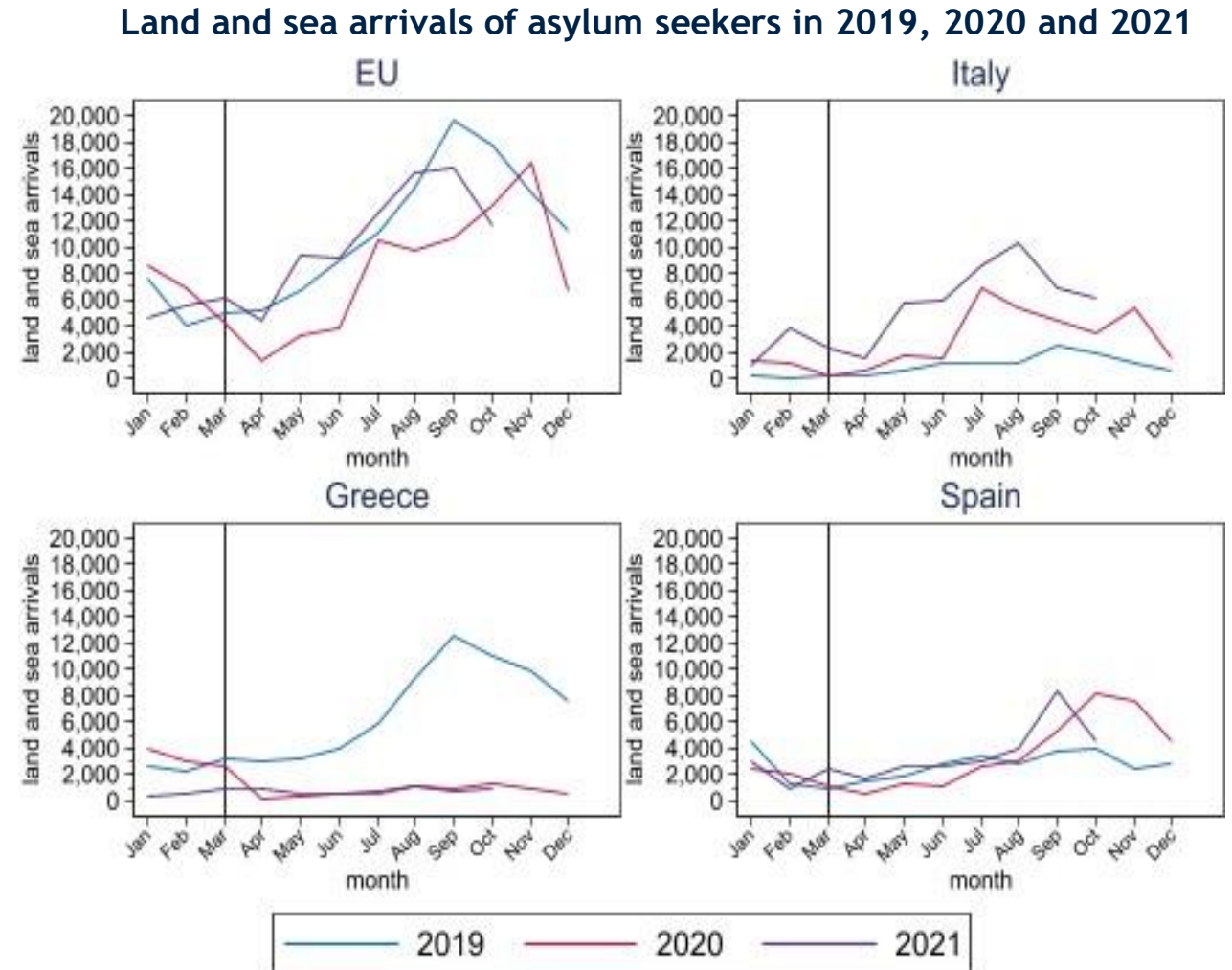
Comparison of first-instance asylum applications in Europe, 2019, 2020 and 2021




Source: Eurostat

# However, arrivals of asylum seekers was only temporarily halted

- Land and sea arrivals of asylum seekers to Europe significantly dropped between March and July 2019 and the same period in 2020 but rebounded in 2021.
- The drop was particularly significant in Greece in 2020 and lasted in 2021.
- After a slight decline between March and August 2020, arrivals to Spain were higher for most 2020 and 2021 than in 2019.
- While lower in March, arrivals to Italy were consistently higher for most of 2020 and 2021 compared to 2019.



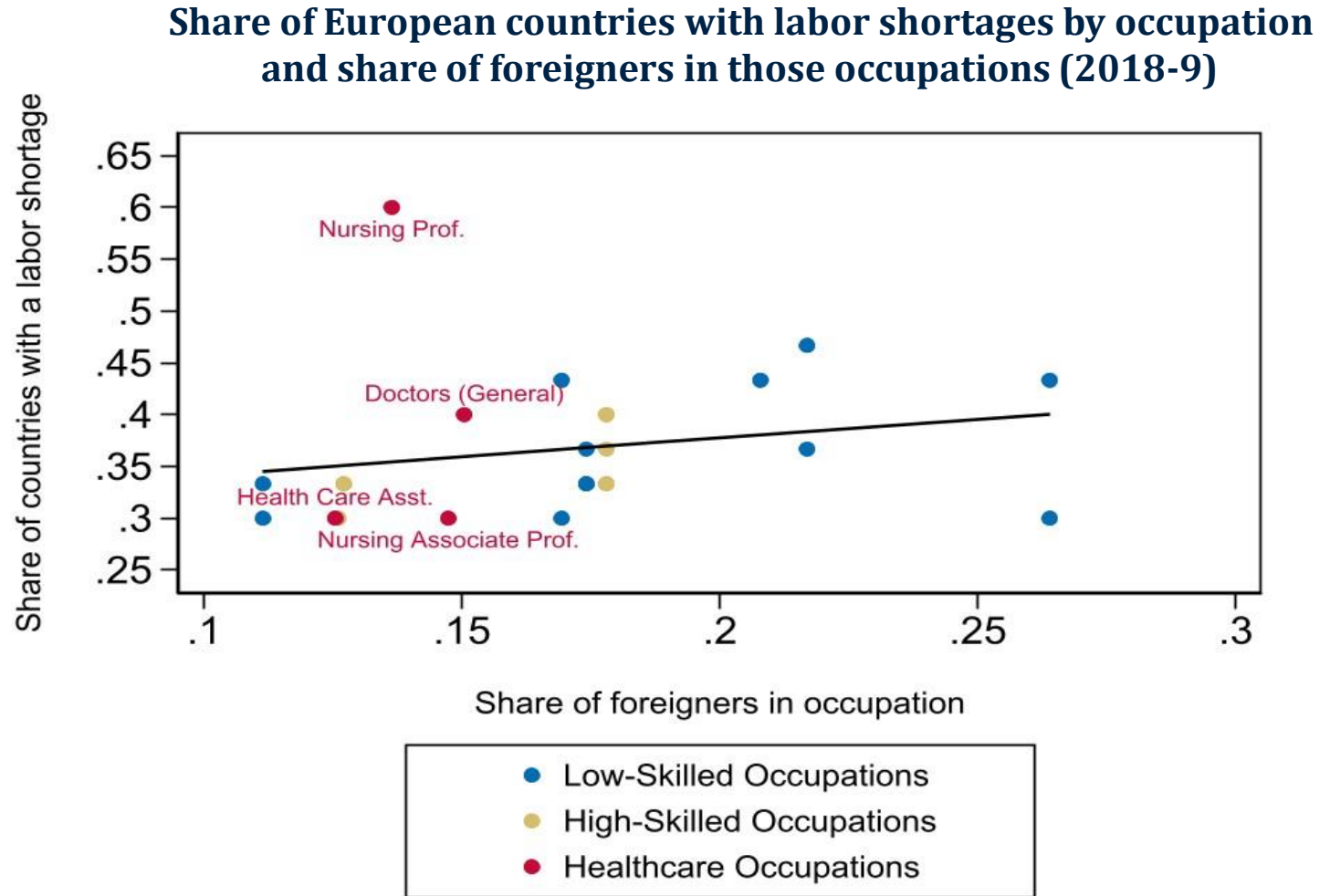
Source: UNHCR



**What do we know about implications for receiving countries?**

# Migrants account for a large share of workers in essential jobs in shortage in Mediterranean receiving countries

- In Europe, positive correlation between the share of foreigners in an occupation and the share of countries that report labor shortages in that occupation
- In Turkey, refugees account for 20% of the agricultural workforce (3RP, 2020).
- In Saudi Arabia, migrants account for three-quarters of the workforce with ~2 million in construction.

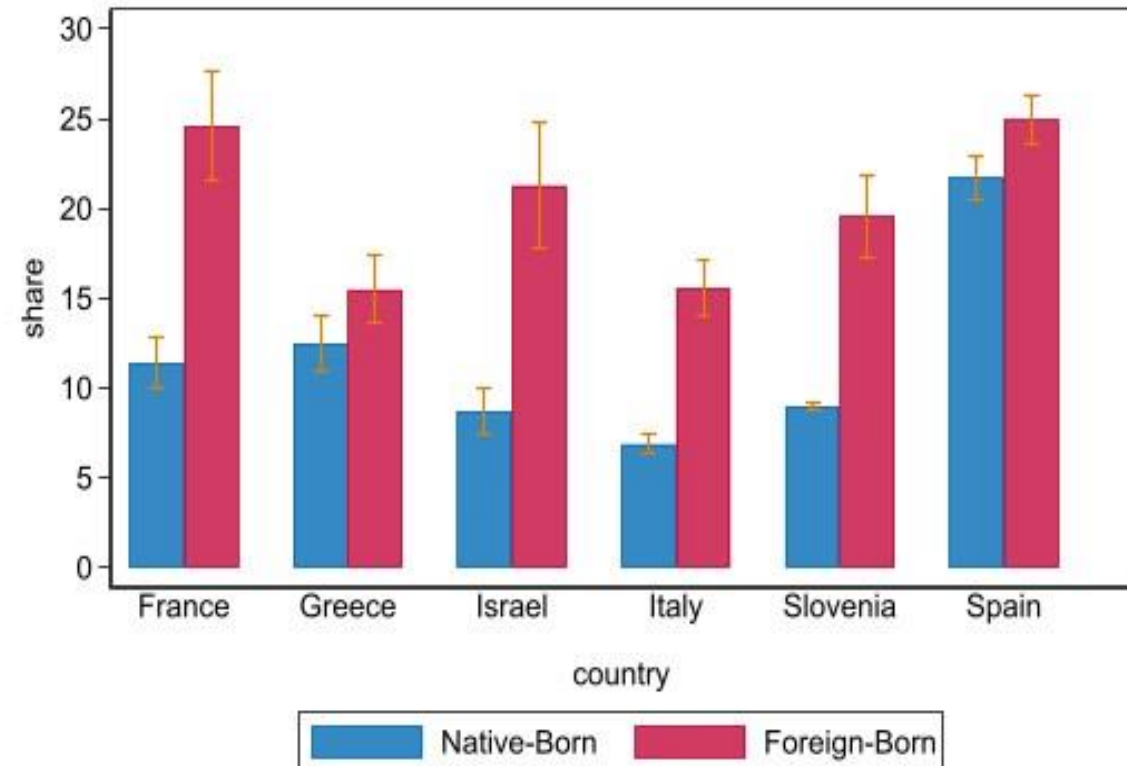


Source: EU-LFS 2018 and EC report on Analysis of shortage and surplus occupations 2020.

# Disruptions in learning impact long-term integration with potential implications for receiving countries

- Severe implications of school closures on learning and future earning, particularly for marginalized groups (Hanushek and Woessman, 2020; Azevedo et al., 2020)
- Large shares of foreign-born students aged 15 do not speak the language of instruction at home
- Foreign-born students aged 15 are less likely to have a computer and internet connection at home and more likely to come from disadvantaged backgrounds than native students (PISA database, 2018)
- Most countries were also forced to end in-person integration courses with impacts on migrants' employability and social integration, including through language learning

Percentage of students of age 15 who do not speak the language of instruction at home, by immigrant background



Source: OECD PISA 2018


\*Note: Native-Born group does not include second generation immigrants





**What do we know about the impacts of  
the crisis on migrants and their families?**

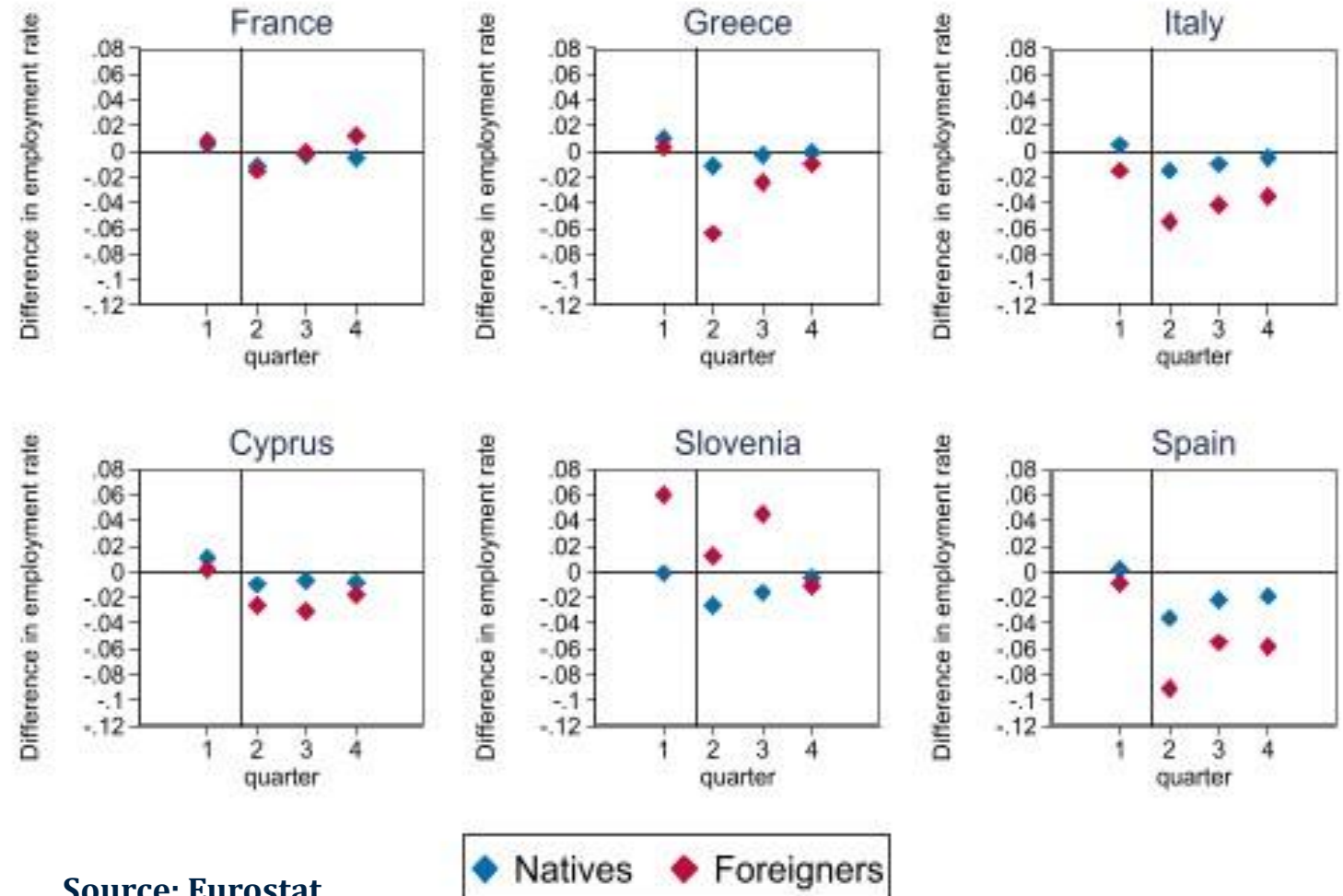
# Migrants in several contexts are more exposed to the virus and in some cases more vulnerable to its health impacts

1. **Living conditions:** Over 1/3 foreigners in Greece and Italy in overcrowded housing; in the GCC, COVID-19 outbreaks in migrant dormitories; Syrian refugees in Turkey report overcrowding in their homes (Özvarış et al., 2020)
2. **Access to healthcare (more broadly to social welfare):** Most migrants have access to healthcare in the EU even if with limitations (IMISCOE, 2020), but administrative and language barriers, lack of knowledge, fear of deportation and discrimination can limit utilization (WHO, 2018;  Lebano, 2020). Limited access and in some cases unaffordable in GCC and Turkey.
  - In France, between Mar-Apr 2020, excess mortality among the foreign-born twice that of native-born compared to 2019 (Papon and Robert-Bobée, 2020)
  - In Italy, non-nationals more likely to be admitted in hospital too late and then needing ICU (ECDC, 2021)
  - In Kuwait, in February-April 2020, foreigners have double the odds of death of admission in ICE compared to natives (Hamadah et al. 2020).
  - In Turkey, Syrians twice more likely than natives to experience mental health problems (Sevinc et al., 2021)
3. **Pre-existing health conditions:** Compared to natives, migrants in Europe more exposed to certain co-morbidities (WHO 2018).
4. **Exposed jobs:** Migrants account for high shares of high-skilled and low-skilled frontline workers in the EU-15 and in low-skilled occupations in the GCC and Turkey

# Migrants experience more severe economic impacts than natives with impacts on poverty and on sending countries

- While declining, immigrants faced relatively higher drops in employment rates than natives in almost all Southern European countries, especially in Greece, Italy, and Spain.
- Signs of recovery in 2021, but not in all Northern Mediterranean countries.
- Similar negative impacts experienced by Syrians in Turkey in 2020 (IFRC and TRC, 2020; 3RP, 2020; UNDP, 2020) and in Jordan and Lebanon, with implications on poverty rates (Tanner et al, 2021).
- While remittances drops were not as dire as predicted, large decreases were experienced in Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Nigeria (KNOMAD, 2021) with potential impacts on food security (IOM and WFP, 2020)

Difference in employment rate between 2020 and 2019 by quarter, citizenship and country



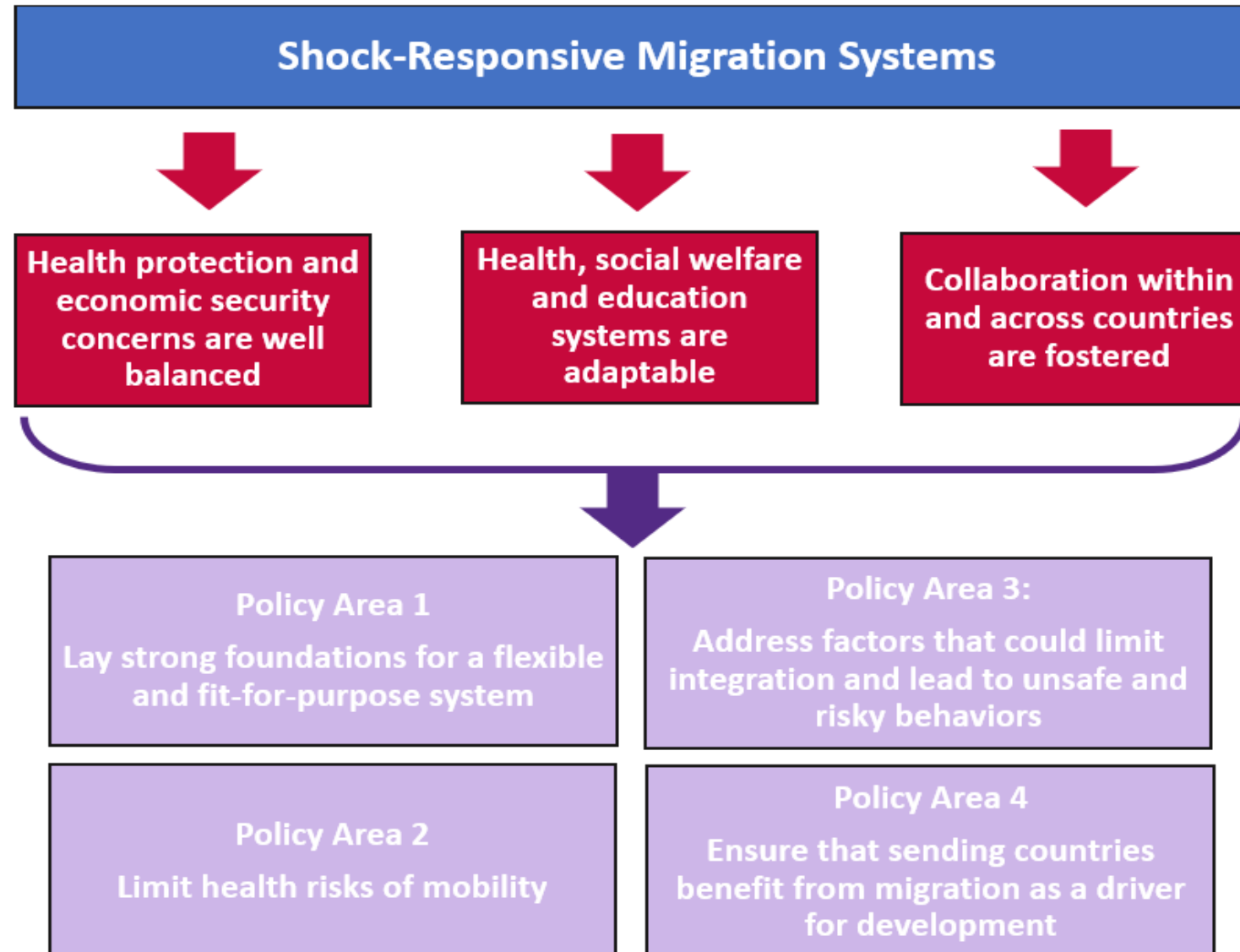
Source: Eurostat

Note: The vertical line represents approximately when the pandemic struck Europe



**How can migration policies alleviate some of these tensions?**

# The COVID-19 crisis highlighted the importance of building shock-responsive mobility systems



Policy areas and suggestions	Implementation	
	Sending	Receiving
<b>Policy Area 1: Lay strong foundations for a flexible and fit-for-purpose system</b>		
Action 1: Ensure that inputs from a variety of stakeholders are taken into account, including from organizations operating at the local level	X	X
Action 2: Adopt an evidence-based approach build on reliable and timely data to design and adjust migration channels	X	X
Action 3: Simplify administrative procedures	X	X
Action 4: Address misinformation and raise awareness of the essential contributions of people on the move during the pandemic	X	X
<b>Policy Area 2: Limit health risks of mobility</b>		
Action 5: Follow established health protocols	X	X
Action 6: Support vaccinations in developing countries	X	X
<b>Policy Area 3: Address factors that could limit integration and lead to unsafe and risky behaviors</b>		
Action 7: Lower administrative and knowledge barriers that prevent migrants from accessing healthcare and other social welfare programs	X	X
Action 8: Stabilize employment opportunities for migrants in receiving countries		X
Action 9: Address the additional barriers to skills acquisition faced by migrants to ensure that they do not fall behind.		X
Action 10: Ensure that camps and migration accommodation meet health and safety requirements		X
<b>Policy Area 4: Ensure that sending countries benefit from migration as a driver for development</b>		
Action 11: Design reintegration programs to assist migrants returning from abroad	X	
Action 12: Strengthen diaspora engagements	X	
Action 13: Ensure that remittances can safely and cheaply arrive to the intended beneficiaries	X	X

# The role of ALMPs in shock-responsive mobility systems

## Action 8: Stabilize employment opportunities for migrants in receiving countries

- Extending ALMPs to migrants important for 2 reasons:
  - To protect migrants from economic shocks that could result into health risks
  - To help employers restore production more quickly
- In countries with ALMPs, young migrants experienced lower increases in unemployment and inactivity (OECD, 2021)
- Examples: wage subsidies, job matching, training/re-skilling, etc.

## Action 11: Design reintegration programs to assist migrants returning from abroad

- Reintegration policies can help returning migrants address some of the barriers they face when looking for jobs in their home countries.
- Examples: recognition of experience gained abroad, job matching (including by leveraging digital tools), training/re-skilling, business support.



**Thank you!**