

GERMANY'S OWN GOAL

Nicht nur im Fußball sollten Zuwanderer willkommen sein. KLAUS ZIMMERMANN zeigt, dass eine restriktive Einwanderungspolitik verhängnisvoll ist. medium US

Until a few years ago, Germany's main soccer league, the *Bundesliga*, was quite a boring affair. But recently, the excitement it generates has risen significantly. This is largely thanks to an impressive number of foreign players from central and eastern Europe in the teams these days.

This is a clear sign of how beneficial migration can be in the modern world. Unfortunately, when faced with the choice of allowing migration from the eight countries that joined the European Union in 2004, the German government was not so open-minded. Along with neighboring Austria, Germany chose not to open its labor market to immigrants from those countries.

This, of course, has not stopped the flow of foreign workers into Germany. All the restrictions have done is to reduce the skill levels of these immigrants. After all, engineers don't usually sneak across borders, nurses are not the types to falsify papers, and schools rarely hire black-market teachers.

It is now clear that the German decision in 2004 has led to the government scoring an own goal. Until that time, legal immigrants to Germany included refugees, asylum seekers, or reuniting families. Despite Germany's resistance to immigration from the new EU, there has been a regular inflow from central and eastern Europe — recently averaging about 50,000 immigrants per year.

after all [ˌæftər ˈɔːl]	schließlich
asylum seeker [əˈsaɪləm ˌsiːkər]	Asylsuchende(r)
Baltic countries [ˈbɔːltɪk ˌkʌntriz]	Baltikum
beneficial [ˌbenɪˈfɪʃəl]	vorteilhaft, nutzbringend
boring [ˈbɔːrɪŋ]	langweilig
competitive [kəmˈpetətɪv]	wettbewerbsfähig
engineer [ˌendʒɪˈniər]	Ingenieur(in)
enlargement [ɪnˈlɑːrdʒmənt]	Erweiterung
falsify sth. [ˈfɔːlsɪfaɪ]	etw. fälschen
inflow [ˈɪnfləʊ]	Zustrom
league [liːg]	Liga
nurse [nɜːs]	Krankenpfleger(in)
open-minded [ˌoʊpən ˈmaɪndɪd]	aufgeschlossen, offen
policymaker [ˈpɔːləsiˌmeɪkər]	politische Entscheidungsträger(in)
refugee [ˌrefjuˈdʒiː]	Flüchtling
reuniting families [riːjuːnɪtɪŋ ˈfæmlɪz]	nachziehende Familienmitglieder
score an own goal [ˌskɔːr ən ˈoʊn ˈɡoʊl]	ein Eigentor schießen
skill level [ˈskɪl ˌlevəl]	Qualifikationsniveau
sneak across: ~ a border	heimlich die Grenze überschreiten
[ˌsniːk əˈkrɔːs]	
soccer [ˈsɔːkər]	Fußball
welfare [ˈwɛlfər]	staatliche Unterstützung

Miroslav Klose and Lukas Podolski: German footballers with migrant backgrounds



Those who arrived after 2004 are older and less well educated than the ones who came to Germany before then. This is not exactly what a competitive modern economy should be aiming for.

In contrast, the more liberal-minded EU countries found that their open labor-market policies were rewarded with what has since proven to be a reduction in low-skill immigrants from new EU members, compared to before 2004.

“Restrictions have reduced the skill levels of immigrants to Germany”

Immigrants to Germany — primarily young men from Poland and the Baltic countries — were 23.1 percent less likely to be employed than Germans after 2004. This is almost double the figure before 2004. In those EU countries that opened their labor markets, the rate of employment for immigrants who came after 2004 is higher than for the earlier arrivals.

Open borders among EU member states do not lead, as is often feared, to a lower-quality labor market. And these immigrants do not have a greater need for welfare than domestic populations. Instead, the migration has, in fact, helped Europe to build both an integrated and dynamic economy.

Germany's restrictive policy has been a complete failure. It has not attracted the required highly skilled immigrants, while continuing to bring in those who are low-skilled. If that isn't a painful own goal, then what is? The newly found vitality in the German *Bundesliga* should show German policymakers the way forward to a better and more inclusive future. BS

Reprinted with permission of *The Wall Street Journal Europe* © 2009 Dow Jones & Company, Inc. All rights reserved.



KLAUS ZIMMERMANN is the director of IZA, the Institute for the Study of Labor, in Bonn, Germany. With Martin Kahanec, he edited the book *EU Labor Markets After Post-Enlargement Migration*, Springer, ISBN 978-3-642-02241-8, €139.05.