



Irregular Punjabi Migration into Belgium: Case Study

Diverse categories of people partake in the phenomenon of irregular migration making use of different networks to reach their destination countries. The patterns of irregularity as well as other observable and unobservable factors also vary. However, some common features can be found in the Punjabi case, such as gullible youth obsessed with foreign countries, neither highly educated nor skilled, and networks of intermediaries who allure them, charge heavy amount of money and attempt to send them abroad in a clandestine manner. The potential migrants consider other successful expats from their neighbourhood or acquaintances as their role models.

This report is a case study on Punjabi irregular migration into Belgium and will use this specific sample to evaluate the Belgian migration policy regime. Punjabis see Belgium as an ideal destination from an economic and geographical standpoint. This, along with the almost fanatical need to go abroad amongst young Punjabis, fuels a persistent flow of migrants. The Punjabi case is a telling parable for policy makers in Belgium and the EU to understand the nature of migration policy and its unintended effects.

This paper expresses the views of the author and not the views of the European Institute for Asian Studies.

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1 PUNJABI MIGRATION: MOTIVATION

Push factors, such as the lack of economic opportunities, religious and political persecution, or hazardous environmental conditions drive people from their country of origin and serve as a trigger for emigration. The availability of jobs, religious or political freedom, and the perception of a relatively liberal policy regime act as pull factors that make the desired country attractive. Pushes and pulls are complementary — that is, migration can only occur if the reasons to emigrate (the push) are accompanied by the corresponding pull at dream destination.

The Push-Pull Factors for Punjabis coming to Belgium

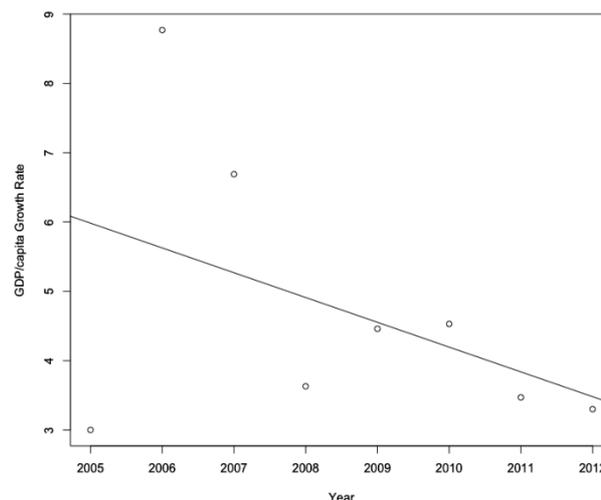
| Push Factor | Pull Factor |
|---|---|
| Low Employment | Network; Family abroad |
| Political Persecution | Jobs with Higher wages |
| Discrimination | Glamour/Status/Perception of European Countries |
| Migration as a Habit/ Migration Culture | Ease of residency |
| Family Obligation | Quality of education |
| Perceived wealth of Non Resident Indian (NRI) household; signalling effects | |
| Competition by local migrants | |
| Escaping Drugs/Crime | |
| Presence of accessible Smuggling routes and services | |

1.1 Push Factors

The state of Punjab is split between India and Pakistan, its name — of Farsi origin — signifies the “five rivers that have blessed it with ideal conditions for wide scale agriculture”. Advances in agricultural practices during the 1970s catalysed the state’s agricultural productivity and the region became known as the food bowl of India. Thus, despite being amongst the smallest states of the Indian Union, it is relatively wealthy compared to other parts of the country. However, a closer look at recent socio-economic data reveals a relative decline in its growth rates and productivity. The expected progression of Punjab from agricultural economy to industrial powerhouse and service-sector leader never took place. Food processing, essential for agricultural prosperity, never bloomed – for instance, Punjab exports wheat but imports wheat flour.

In the past 2 decades, Punjab’s agricultural productivity has fallen considerably and farmer indebtedness has reached phenomenal levels. Studies done by the Punjab Agricultural University shows that almost 89 per cent of Punjabi farmer households are reeling under debt – estimates peg the debt at around INR 50,000 (EUR 666) for every hectare of landholding. Unsustainable and intensive farming practices have decreased the ground water table, polluted the soil with pesticides and turned agriculture into a losing proposition. As a result, the Indian food bowl has witnessed, for the first time in its history, farmer suicides.

**Punjab GDP/capita rate
2005 to 2012**



Data Source: Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (2012).

In addition, surveys and studies reveal an alarmingly high secondary school dropout rate. In fact, a common refrain amongst Punjabi parents is that they have no other option than to send their children abroad for stable employment since their low level of education is not good enough to secure a well-paying stable job in India. It is an ironic state of affairs given that the wage squeeze amongst low skilled jobs in Punjab is partially a consequence of large scale domestic migration from other states such as Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. This, along with the deteriorating law and order situation, weakening level of governance and an overall decline in its ease of doing business, paints a picture of a state on a socio-economic downslope.

Another major factor that stokes Punjabi fascination for alien shores is the desire to earn the “NRI” tag¹, which is seen as a status symbol especially among Punjabi youth. The social structure in the village, which was traditionally based on caste, landholdings, family background, and educational achievements, has now added a new distinguishing factor among families: those with members abroad, who are kept on a higher pedestal, and those without. NRI families are typically more wealthy — about 10-12 per cent of Punjab’s GDP is reliant on remittances from abroad not factoring in the unofficial flows — and they are not afraid to showcase it through the purchase of land, houses and cars.

Dropout rates at primary, middle, and secondary school level in Punjab

| Class | 1998-99 | | | 2002-03 | | |
|---------------|---------|-------|--------------|---------|-------|--------------|
| | Boys | Girls | Total | Boys | Girls | Total |
| I-V | 22.86 | 20.62 | 21.78 | 26.37 | 24.07 | 25.29 |
| I-VIII | 26.61 | 29.39 | 27.91 | 33.71 | 31.67 | 32.75 |
| I-X | 39.99 | 44.35 | 42.03 | 43.81 | 47.10 | 48.10 |

Source: <http://punjabgovt.nic.in/government>.

¹ Non-Resident Indian.

This signalling process has created what has been referred to as a “fanatical mania”² amongst Punjabi youths to go abroad. To fulfil this desire they are willing to pay whatever price and use whatever means, whether legal or illegal. Even from a traditional economic perspective, many studies have showcased the growing wealth division between transnational migrants and people who decide to stay in India.

It was only a few decades ago that the Indian government conducted a full on military operation to suppress Sikh³ insurgency and extremism in Punjab. These incidents, which led to the assassination of former Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi by her Sikh bodyguards, symbolise the fragile nature of the Indian union. The events that transpired following her assassination, are a dark mark on modern India as mobs of people with the implicit support of certain figures in the government lynched and tortured many Sikhs — who are easily distinguished by their turbans and beards — on the streets of the capital, New Delhi. This forced many Punjabis to flee to destinations ranging from Lebanon to Canada. Relaxed asylum laws, established community networks and economic opportunities all guided the choice of the countries where they settled.

The above combination of economic tediousness and a large diaspora abroad has created a situation, where young people are fully aware of the material riches and desires that wealth can fulfil, but do not have the means to do so in their home country. Drugs and alcohol abuse are rife in both urban and rural areas, thus families often compel their sons and, if a suitable suitor is found, daughters to go abroad in order to escape the ills of addiction and sloth.

This situation is further exacerbated by the role of travel agents. Taking advantage of the large demand for emigration, travel agencies became a visible part of the commercial scape in Punjab. Walking through a bazaar in Ludhiana or Amritsar, one cannot escape the hoardings of travel agencies offering their services. In fact, looking at figures of irregular emigration, Ludhiana and Patiala stand on top for regions within Punjab, possibly due to better exposure of youth in these big cities to travel agents, who are prevalent in urban areas.

Caste, alongside kinship, also plays a key role in facilitating chain migration. Transnational caste networks are a major force driving migration to Europe. The *Jat* Sikhs and the *Lubana* Sikhs are the two major caste groups abroad that, according to surveys done by Saha (2012), make up almost 50 percent of irregular migrants from Punjab.

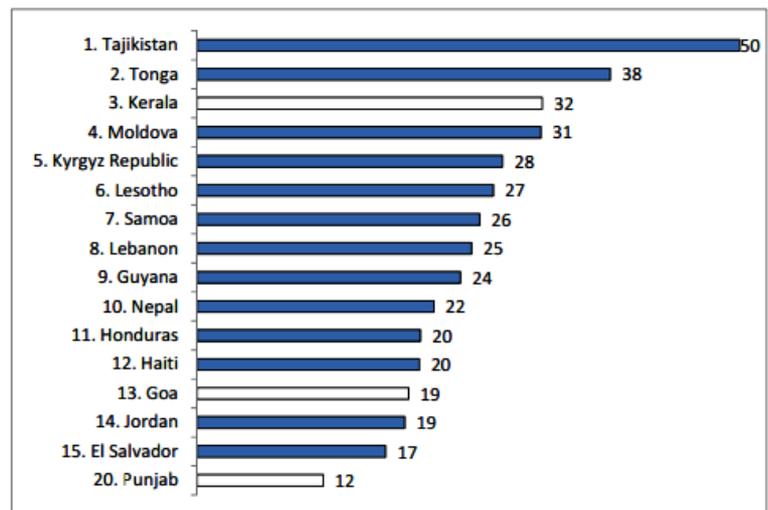


² Saha, K. C. (2012). Irregular migration from India to the EU: Punjab and Haryana Case Study. *CARIM-India RR*, 28.

³ Sikhism is the most prominent religion of Punjab followed by Hinduism and Islam. Although Sikhs are spread all over North India, for the purposes of this study Sikhs and Punjabis will be used interchangeably.

Bhawra (2013) notes that in the perception of prospective migrants, ends justify means due to lack of awareness and/or lack of faith in the legal channel which is perceived to be cumbersome, non-transparent and impersonal in nature. On the other hand, the irregular migration channel via travel agents has elements of personal touch and assured success even if it is more expensive. The fact that a family member has migrated in an irregular manner does not, in any way, act as a stigma against the family back home, provided it was successful.⁴

Remittances as a % of GDP for Indian States in Comparison to Highly Dependent Countries

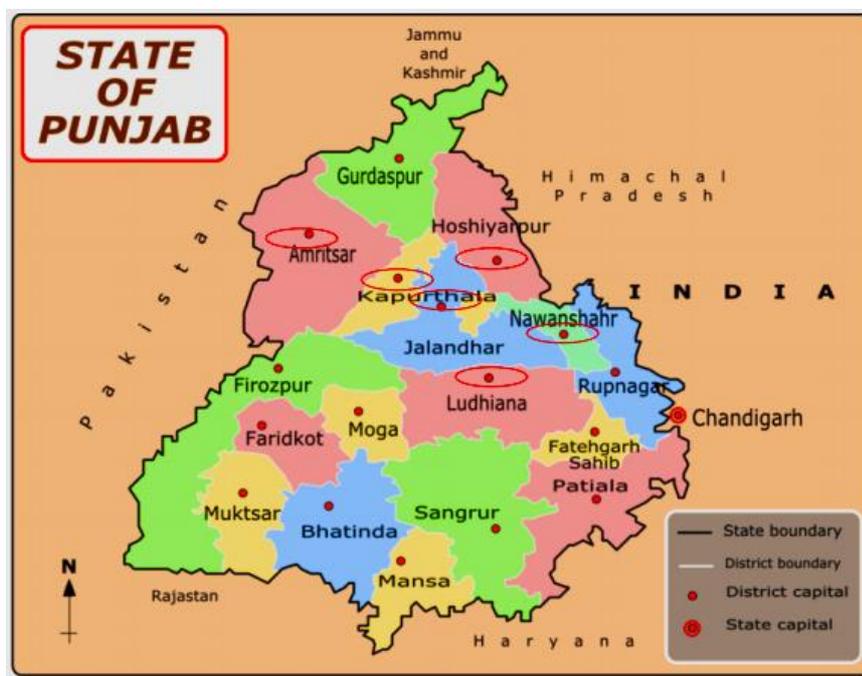


Source: Tumbe, C. (2011). *Remittances in India: Facts & Issues*. Indian Institute of Management Bangalore.

The above analysis brings forward the combination of personal, family and societal pressures the average Punjabi youth is put under to emigrate abroad. These strains create a sense of desperation for which no price or risks are high enough. This is the key insight that policymakers have to keep in mind when understanding the inclination for irregular migration amongst Punjabis.

The current refugee crisis, which has resulted in a massive influx of Syrian and Iraqi asylum

Districts in Punjab Highly Prone to Irregular Migration



Source: Saha (2012).

⁴ Bhawra, V. K. (2013). Irregular migration from India to the EU: evidence from the Punjab. *Migration Policy Centre*. Retrieved from <http://cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream/handle/1814/29465/CARIM-India-2013%20-%202003.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>.

seekers into the EU, has funded the creation of new smuggling routes and entrenchment of established routes in the Mediterranean and Aegean Sea. Though the influx of Punjabis utilising these trails has been relatively low compared to the number of Afghanis and Pakistanis, it is not beyond comprehension for Punjabis and their travel agents to join the bandwagon.

1.2 Pull Factors

Belgium's contact with Punjabis dates back to the First World War, when Sikhs were the most prominent soldiers of the British Army in the trenches of Flanders Fields.⁵ However, it was only in 1972 that the first Punjabis settled in Belgium although they did not come directly from Punjab. Instead, they arrived via Uganda, where Idi Amin's rise to power had resulted in the expulsion of the country's Indian community⁶ and eight Sikh families were resettled in Belgium.⁷ However, it was the escalation of the communal conflict between Sikhs and the Indira Gandhi led government during the 1980s that pushed a large number of young Sikh men to seek refuge in Belgium. Their asylum requests were rejected and, as a result, their migrant statuses became irregular. This meant that they had to seek employment informally, which they found predominantly in the agriculture industry in Limburg. After the regularisation drives of the 2000s allowed them to gain Belgium nationality, their families joined them, further increasing the Punjabi population.

The above narrative tracks the evolution of Punjabi migrant networks in Belgium. It is these connections that constitute the most telling pull factor for Punjabis to migrate into Belgium. The instances of irregular migration from the Punjab in recent years have been substantial as is evident from the figures of criminal cases registered relating to illegal migration. The role of networks is essential for facilitating the movements of Punjabis whether intra families or intra caste. *Gurdwaras* often act as places where migrants are provided information regarding means and policies for migrating. Apart from these, NGO's, trade unions and recruiting agencies are also utilised by Punjabis seeking ways to enter Belgium.

Geography is another important pull factor. Many studies have highlighted that Punjabis look at EU countries as springboards to their ultimate destinations, such as the UK, USA and Canada. Belgium's close location to the UK, a major destination for the Punjabi diaspora, makes it their ideal transit station. Moreover, relatively soft residency policies in Belgium and the tightening of migration laws in neighbouring countries such as Germany and the Netherlands, has had a spillover effect of Punjabi migrants from across the borders. This phenomenon has been referred to as "transnational mobility" and is a significant characteristic of Punjabi migration.⁸ The pull factor of Belgian policies will be discussed in greater depth later in the paper.

As explained before, most of the early Punjabi migrants gained employment in the fruit orchards of Limburg (Sint-Truiden), where the demand for cheap, low skilled and flexible labour is huge during the harvest season. The experience of being farmers in their agrarian

⁵ 'In Flanders Fields Museum' in Ypres documents this in their exhibits on WW1.

⁶ 175 Ugandans Asian Refugees were resettled in Belgium (Cosemans and Goddeeris, 2013).

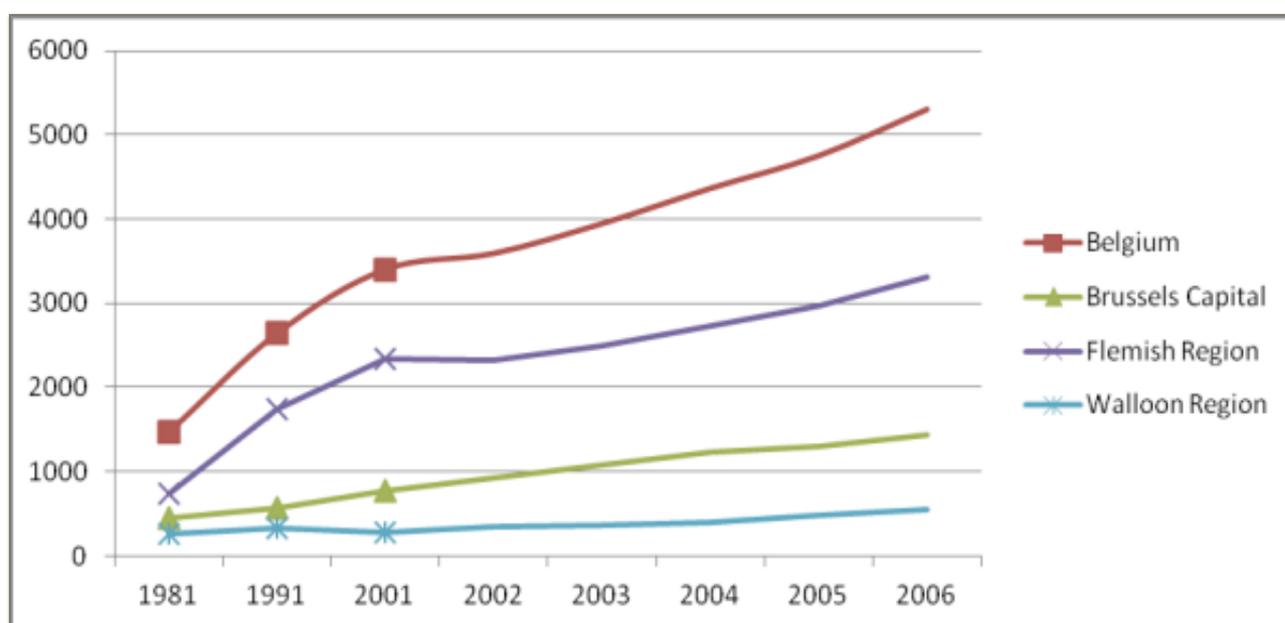
⁷ Cosemans, S., and Goddeeris, I. (2013). Indian migration to Belgium. CARIM-India Research Report. Retrieved from <http://cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream/handle/1814/29932/CARIM-India-2013%20-%2045.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>.

⁸ Cloet, Q., Cosemans, S., & Goddeeris, I. (2012). Mobility as a Transnational Strategy: Sikhs Moving to and from Belgium. *Sikhs Across Borders: Transnational Practices of European Sikhs*, 51.

home state made them ideal candidates to fill this shortage. The need for workers on these farms was such that migrants with ongoing applications were assigned work permits and even irregular labour migrants were tolerated.⁹ However, the advent of the Schengen regime has resulted in an influx of Polish workers in agriculture, which led Punjabis to move into other domains, most prevalent being night shop ownerships in urban areas such as Antwerp and Brussels.

Educational facilities in Belgium also constitute an important pull factor. Prospective migrants in Punjab commonly enrol in university courses and get part time jobs, thus ensuring a stable standard of living. However, many students coming from poor educational backgrounds and unable to balance work-school responsibilities fall out of courses and remain in Belgium in an irregular capacity. Travel agents based in Punjab and Delhi typically facilitate this phenomenon, and relatively liberal student visa procedure further enforces this process.

Evolution of the number of NRIs per region



Source: Cosemans and Goddeeris (2013).

It is important to understand the underlying motivations of migrants — this is where a factoring of pull and push factors comes in handy. A study by van Meetren et al. (2009) looks at irregular migration in Belgium and concludes that, typically, irregular migrants can be divided by their aspirations into three main categories: *investment* migrants, *legalisation* migrants and *settlement* migrants. While those with investment aspirations aim to raise their standard of living and return to their country of origin, the latter two focus on settling in Belgium either legally – mostly those with the legalisation aspirations – or in an irregular form. It can be discussed that Punjabis in Belgium fall into the last two categories. The authors of the study further argue that a combination of social and economic capital is required to realise migrants’ aspirations. Whereas the established networks are able to provide the first substance, the sale of land or family support in Punjab ensures the necessary financial funds.

⁹ Cosemans and Goddeeris. "Indian migration to Belgium."

2 PROFILE OF THE PUNJABI IRREGULAR MIGRANT

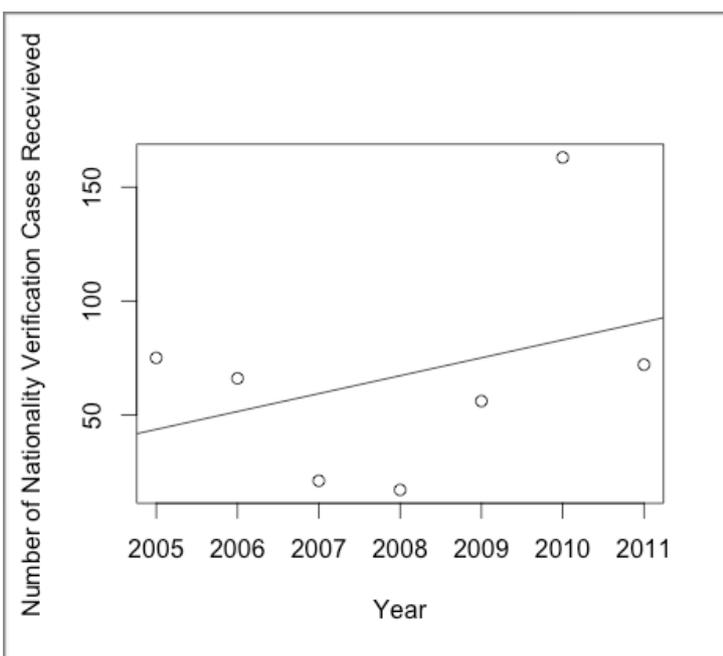
Based on the pull and push factors, a picture of the typical Punjabi migrant making use of irregular ways can be deduced. This consideration is further aided by the survey done by Saha (2012) on behalf of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in 2009. The typical Punjabi irregular migrant arriving in Belgium is a young male between the age of 21 and 30. Coming from a family of farmers, his education level is poor — Saha’s survey reveals that about 17 per cent of Punjabi irregular migrants are almost illiterate — and his skill level is low. He is unmarried and in case he is married, the family is left behind in Punjab to take care of the elderly members. He is from the Jat Sikh or Lubana Sikh caste, and utilises his network within his caste in order to speed his immigration process and secure a stable source of income – all informally. His aspiration is either to settle in Belgium and eventually regularise in order to bring his family or prospective family over, or to move on to an English speaking country such as Canada or UK and tap into the larger Punjabi diaspora there. Night shops or orchards represent two viable sources of employment for this migrant.

3 CONSEQUENCES ON BELGIUM SOCIETY

3.1 Dowry, Sham Weddings, Mail Order Brides and Marriage Networks

According to the Indian Ministry of Women and Child Development there are about 30,000 brides in India that were abandoned by their NRI husbands. A further investigation of the figures reveal that the majority of these women are from Punjab.

Nationality Verification Requests from Belgium Received by Punjab Police (2005-2011)



From the rates of nationality verifications received by Punjab Police from countries in EU and North America, it can be inferred that Punjab figures high in the list of Indian states to which irregular migrants to these countries belong.

Source: Bhawra (2013).

Though there are no specific figures for Belgium, it can be assumed that given the flow of migrants from the Doab region (Jalandhar and Ludhiana), a significant number of Punjabi brides have been left deserted in Belgium. These women usually come from rural patriarchal backgrounds, are lowly educated and low skilled, rendering them unemployable and thus making them a potential burden on the Belgian social security system.

Punjabis cherish the memory of their motherland, and marrying someone from Punjab is a way of maintaining this attachment. This is an important motivation for picking a bride that can bring with her the traditions and values that Punjabis hold sacred. However, the nature of transnational marriages clashes with the traditional Punjabi marriage. Whether the groom or bride, issues of mismatched expectations cause undue distress to everyone involved.

Not all broken marriages are sham marriages. Many transnational Indian relationships end because of the lack of the traditional support system of the joint family. The pressure of living abroad involves the spouse coming from Punjab having to adapt to her new surroundings, which is a challenging undertaking. Moreover, the issue of dowry is worth mentioning as grooms living abroad are perceived to be well off and have a high “value” in the Punjabi marriage market. This “value” has to be paid in the form of a dowry by the bride’s family, a traditional practice in North India despite it being illegal according to the Indian Constitution. However, many NRI grooms, especially those that are irregular, are not affluent and use marriage as a way to extort dowry from desperate families keen to marry off their daughters to a NRI son in law. Therefore, plenty of these unions exist purely for financial reasons.

Alarmingly, reports and studies indicate that despite the large number of sham marriages, the craze for shores abroad in the Doab region is such that migration numbers have shown no decline. These relationships represent the tragic part of the transnational Punjabi experience. Brides are often subjected to abuse and torture for the extortion of dowry and when no money is forthcoming, they are abandoned. Addressing this issue is made difficult by the clandestine nature of these marriages. Joint cooperation with authorities in India and Belgium is crucial for finding a remedy to this epidemic which constitutes both immigration fraud and human rights abuse.

3.2 Night Shops in Brussels

Migrants bring business. For centuries, they have shown to be highly resourceful in terms of their settlement and survival in their new environments. With almost no financial or social assets, they are able to use their human capital to set up businesses. A growing number of studies have shown that many migrants become entrepreneurs as they face obstacles entering the job market. Punjabis are no different, in fact they personify the migrant working overtime at wee hours of the night — often joined by their family members — selling essential grocery items. Night shops are a common sight in the urban areas of Belgium and represent a crucial business for Punjabi migrants. Even though the prices of items are not any lower than in major grocery stores, their availability during the night makes them an unmissable part of the nightlife in cities such as Brussels.

However, there is a growing perception that with the increasing number of migrants from South Asian regions such as Punjab, the amount of night shops is escalating. In response, some of the municipalities in Brussels introduced measures limiting their numbers on one street. Furthermore, there is a tendency for night shops to engage in parasitic business practices — setting up a shop around pubs and nightclubs and providing a cheaper option to

purchase alcohol and food for the patrons — a disastrous scheme for bar owners. Moreover, night shop workers have been known to exceed the allowed hours. For example in Brussels, shops with the status of *nachtwinkel* can only be open from 17.00 to 02.00, however, these regulations are often flouted. Furthermore, these stores are said to encourage public drunkenness and mass littering due to selling cheap alcohol. This phenomenon is also exacerbated by the lack of institutional constraints that make it difficult to implement solutions and countermeasures, such as prohibition of alcohol selling after a certain hour and the intensification of inspections to enforce the legislation.

Although the above claims are yet to be supported with empirical evidence, all the aforementioned phenomena have brought migrants' business practices into question as accusations of tax evasion and underpaid irregular working conditions are common. The night shop owners are desperate to get good returns on their investments — largely inventory costs, property rental plus night shop licensing fees — and are willing to push the legal and ethical boundaries by hiring irregular workers to get the necessary returns.

3.3 Informal Labourers

The basic fact is that every country in the world has an informal labour market, and its existence itself seems to facilitate the creation of such informal markets among migrants. However, the status of foreigners working in the informal sector is not always clear-cut. Quite often, Punjabi migrants come to Belgium legally, but without the necessary work permits and, therefore, even though they work informally, their immigration status is regular. This greyness of condition is necessary to be taken into consideration when formulating policy actions targeting the informal migrant labour sector.

Punjabis initially gained employment as fruit farmers in the Limburg region. The fruit farm owners often hired irregular employees, sometimes with the implicit permission of authorities, as they found it increasingly difficult to find workers for the seasonal, low paid and temporary nature of the job — strawberry, apple and mushroom picking in summer and maintenance of fir trees in winter. These sectors are partially supervised by labour inspections and liability for the presence of irregular workers lies with the fruit farm owner. The model of recruitment focuses on hiring workers as groups and not individuals, which suggests the presence of agents and organisations who act as middle men and information providers. In the Punjabi case, *gurdwaras*, the Sikh worship sites, often act as locations for such institutions.

Many of these workers live at lodgings provided by the farmers. The large-scale presence of foreign employees seeking a discreet form of shelter has made these lodgings into an income generating activity for employers and the network of intermediaries involved in the recruitment process. Furthermore, fieldwork¹⁰ reveals that majority of workers do not know in advance the amount they will be paid. Wages are based on productivity and other arbitrary and vague criteria. This situation exists for both legal (with a C temporary work permit) and irregular workers.

¹⁰ Rezaei, S., and Goli, M. (2008). The Underground Economy and the impacts of the informal opportunity structure. *Undocumented Worker Transitions*. Retrieved from https://ec.europa.eu/anti-trafficking/sites/antitrafficking/files/the_underground_economy_and_the_impacts_of_the_informal_opportunity_structure_1.pdf.

Poor work conditions, underpayment and employment in the illegal economy are rife, a situation exacerbated by the clandestine nature of this sector. Above all, these circumstances confine workers in a subordinate position without an opportunity to raise complaints or demands to the State or the employer. On the contrary, they see themselves as indebted to those intermediaries who helped them in their journey and employment.

4 POLICY SCENARIO IN BELGIUM

One of the most visible initiatives taken by Belgian authorities was the shutting down of certain *gurdwaras* when it became apparent that many undocumented migrants found a shelter there. The government has also created domestic service jobs¹¹ to integrate long-term unemployed women into the work market and to lower the cost of labour. Tax incentives given to users of these services have led to the disappearance of a great number of undeclared jobs. However, needs of the market continue to serve the form and content of the underground economy, binding together suppliers and demanders of labour around common interests. Government initiatives do not seem to resolve the situation completely. The fact that most migrants are recruited or made aware of vacancies informally by sub-contractors and agents in the source regions, such as Punjab, constrains the Belgian authorities' ability to effectively intervene.

Nonetheless, Belgium was one of the first EU countries to adopt a law against human trafficking in 1995, recently reformed in order to conform to EU and international dispositions. This law punishes trafficking in human beings as well as human exploitation, both sexual and economic. A Protocol of collaboration to fight the trade in human trafficking was concluded between the social inspectorate of the Minister of the Social Security and the social inspectorate of the Minister of Employment, which increased the number of controls in the most affected sectors, such as cleaning, restaurants and prostitution.

Indian employees predominantly receive short-term, renewable "Work Permits B", which grants the right to work in Belgium for just one employer for a maximum of 12 months. The permit is given after application by the employer and can be renewed several times. After four years of legitimate work, the employee can apply for a permit for an indefinite period — a "Work Permit A." The third type, a "Work Permit C" is aimed at specific categories of migrants, whose stay in Belgium is temporary or uncertain, such as students or candidate-refugees. The number of NRIs obtaining unlimited Permit A and permanent residency after several years of work experience in Belgium is almost non-existent. The amount of people making use of the third option is also insignificant compared to those working with a B Permit, which is mostly granted to highly qualified employees. In general, people from outside the European Union encounter enormous administrative difficulties when obtaining jobs or trying to have their diplomas recognized, if they have not attended secondary school in Belgium or if they do not belong to the pre-1974 immigrant worker population.

Belgium lacks a comprehensive law on integration of immigrants at the national level. Migration and asylum policies are federal competences. In the area of integration, the competences fall under the domain of regions, i.e. Flanders, Wallonia and Brussels Capital, and language-based communities, i.e. Flemish, French and Dutch-speaking. The Regions are responsible for territorial matters, such as economy and labour market management,

¹¹ Emplois de proximité.

supervision of provinces and so on, whereas the language-based communities are responsible for culture and language related issues, such as integration of foreigners and ethno-cultural minorities, education and health.

The evolution of migration, asylum, and integration policies in Belgium has shown that there is a clear need to think about these policies more holistically, comprehensively, and proactively at the federal, regional, and local levels – and several steps have already been taken in that direction. At the federal legislative level, important reforms have been passed (or are about to) regarding family reunification, asylum, and citizenship. Both the Flemish and French-speaking communities have reformed integration and social inclusion policies in the last decade, though this area remains a work in progress. Apart from newcomer integration frameworks, both communities are increasingly aware of the need for mainstream inclusive policies such as education.

| Police data of number of captured Indian nationals with irregular status | | | |
|---|--------------|--------------|----------|
| Year | India | Total | % |
| 2008 | 1616 | 16070 | 10.06 |
| 2009 | 1325 | 17938 | 7.39 |
| 2010 | 556 | 14884 | 3.74 |

Source: Centrum voor Gelijkheid van Kansen en Racismebetrijding, Migraties en Migrantenpopulaties in België. Statistisch en Demografisch Verslag 2008-2012.

5 CONCLUSION

The irregular migration of Punjabis into Belgium entails many different elements including push and pull factors, smuggling, no or partial integration as well as the various negative consequences for the Belgian society. When formulating effective policy response, it is crucial that externalities, such as the informal labour market and abandoned brides, are treated as symptoms of the underlying dynamics prompting these young people to consider Belgium as a destination. It is fundamental to stop the movements of Punjabis by working with various stakeholders involved – these include authorities in the Punjab/Indian central government, the EU and countries such as the UK and Canada, other ultimate destinations for many Indians. This cannot be solved by unilateral forms of policy actions that are limited in scope and suffer from informational and jurisdictional constraints. Transnational cooperation is the only way to address this transnational phenomenon.

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