

Abstract

In the light of the current refugee crisis in the European Union, and the remarkably critical stance the East Central European states are taking in Brussels, this research contributes to a broader understanding of the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary and Poland's policies towards refugees. By scrutinizing the process of developing refugee policies during the 1990s and 2000s, the research will demonstrate that the countries united in the V4 platform in their first years of transition generously contributed to international refugee protection. Steep increase of asylum applicants and negotiation talks with the EU in the late 1990s brought various changes to the refugee policies in the region, marked by more closely defining and the enhancing of asylum seekers' and recognized refugees' rights, but also by lower refugee recognition rates. Accession to the European Union ultimately resulted in more complete and comprehensive asylum policies in line with the Common European Asylum System (CEAS). However, the V4 states maintained rather restrictive interpretations of the European policy, explained by the pressure the CEAS places on the states at the EU's external border and lower economic capacity to accommodate large numbers of refugees. Recent developments are mostly the result of political exploitation of the issue against the backdrop of Euro-skepticism in the region.