

Abstract

The conflict over the right way to tackle the so-called refugee crisis in Europe has proved that relations between the EU and the Visegrád Group have changed. The political dispute surfaced most clearly regarding the different proposals for a quota-based refugee relocation system – a decision which was refused by the V4. The bloc consisting of the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia first articulated its common position on migration in September 2015 and several times afterwards. On the basis of these statements, one can summarise their approach as follows: (1) Protecting the external borders of the EU and underlining the importance of fulfilling the obligations for the EU acquis; (2) Effective management of the root causes of migration flows, which could help reduce the number of migrants; (3) Refusing Germany's open-door migration policy. Although an increasing number of EU member states share a similar approach, the V4 as the whole started to be perceived as a coalition known for obstructing practices. The split on the issue gave life to a new wave of speculation about the increasing split between “old” and “new” Europe and the possible shift of the latter eastwards. Furious politicians and public opinion in Western Europe continued to remind the Visegrád countries of their lack of solidarity and burden sharing on the refugee crisis. Despite the multiple transformations Eastern Europe has undergone since 1989, the Group emerged again as an ideal type – an unsympathetic not-quite-European subject mired in paranoia about foreigners, exaggerated concerns about self-determination and self-preservation, and timeworn claims of historical suffering. An analyse of the actual situation of the Visegrád countries with regard to the irregular movement proves that whereas they uniformly reject the idea of compulsory relocation within the EU, in general the Group is far from homogenous. As argued in this thesis, it is increasingly fractious. Hungary and Poland significantly differ from the Czech Republic and Slovakia. Even within the Group, Hungary may have acquired a specific position with its total denial of the fact that irregularly arriving persons may need protection within the EU. The seemingly simple story of uniformity among the Visegrád countries on the issue of immigration is revealed as a much more complex aggregation of diverse political views.