

The Response of the Visegrad 4 Countries to the Migrant Crisis

Project of the Hungarian Europe Society supported by the Friedrich-Naumann-Foundation for Freedom

1. Original proposal:

This project will review and analyse the response of the V4 countries to the refugee crisis. These countries' behaviour vis-a-vis the crisis has markedly differed from the reactions of the other EU countries. Even taking into consideration individual differences between them, the Visegrad countries stood out for their xenophobia with regards to the migrants and their reluctance towards the emerging EU quota system. This position shocked other EU countries, which called it non-European, and it has caused the emergence of an East/West rift within the Union. The project will aim to identify the causes for this behaviour, describe its evolution, compare the similarities and difference across the V4 countries and make related policy recommendations.

2. The focus of the project:

We intend to make research about the consequences of the European migration crisis, the behaviour of the governments/elites in the Visegrad 4 countries, and the general attitudes of the citizens towards the migration wave when focusing on a couple of dimensions of the topic. (We will not deal with the traditional “Western” part of the European Union; hence, there will be no systematic comparison between the relatively old member states and the Central European region.)

We need to cover the following aspects of the crisis:

- the domestic political landscape: the national governments' activities and political manoeuvres, including public statements and propaganda campaigns, reaction and activities of the opposition forces, attitudes towards proposals by the European institutions and behaviour vis-a-vis other EU and non-EU countries, public debates,

- the Visegrád Cooperation: how do member governments form common positions, the legacy of 25 year long shaky friendship, a shift towards “sovereign” Visegrád political stance when challenging “Brussels” and German leadership, the impact of populist political turn towards ‘illiberal democracies’,
- legal changes (if any): application and modification of the legal framework during the crisis, for example criminalisation of border-crossing in Hungary,
- civic engagement: the scope and impact of civic activism in response to the crisis, international collaboration, human rights advocacy, successes and failures of grass-root institutionalisation processes,
- historical-sociological background: peculiarities of the region’s past regarding tolerance, co-existence, respect of minority groups and individuals; the legacy of the twentieth century and political development since the regime-changes,
- demographic analysis: what do we know about the refugees?

3. Methodological aspects and cooperation:

We need to find a common ground amongst the cooperating partners how to implement our project. It might happen, however, that some aspects are not so relevant in all of the countries which are involved. Still, we should have an understanding how to describe and analyse the situation in the Visegrád 4. Research materials are supposed to be comparative or complementary as the outcomes of further deliberation about the structure and content amongst the partners...

Our proposals focus on the following topics:

- a) Short studies summarising recent development concerning the refugee crisis in the individual countries taking into account the above mentioned aspects.
- b) Content/discourse analysis of political behaviour and statements of major political actors from a normative human rights oriented approach.
- c) Short studies about the historical backgrounds in the individual countries.

d) A comprehensive basic questionnaire to be set up and filled out by all the partners.

4. Workshop in Budapest:

We will have a one day workshop in Budapest for a discussion amongst our partners. The event should take place when major parts of the research are already completed. There might be a key-note presentation about the European political crisis management and the legal challenges. We intend to invite representatives from some of the “front countries”, probably Croatia and Serbia.

5. Publication:

We will edit and publish a final paper following the consultations and the materials produced during the project period.

6. Partners:

Our Czech partner is Europeum from Prague.

Our Slovak partner is the Institut ľudských práv - Human Rights Institute from Bratislava.

Our Polish partner is the Centre for Direct Democracy Studies (CDDS) at the University of Białystok

7. Experts, invited guests:

We want to include some experts on migration into the project. Also, we are going to contact civil activists in Hungary who assisted the refugees during the crisis in Hungary in summer 2015. Many HES members belong to one of these categories (or both): they will be included into the project.

There are advocacy groups and research institutes which might be invited to contribute to our project and participate at the workshop.

8. Budget:

We have received a grant of 5.000 € for the research and the workshop. Another 1.000 € has been offered for the final publication. The Hungarian Europe Society will manage the budget in cooperation with its partners.

9. Team:

As usual, we will set up an organising team for the implementation of the research, the workshop, and the publication. Each partner should name a person who will be the contact person during the whole period.

10. Duration of the project.

At the moment we think that the workshop should take place in May 2016. We would like to extend the deadline of the publication till the end of September.

Budapest, 18 February 2016