



# The Refugee Crisis and the Reactions of the Visegrad Countries

---

**Final Report**  
September 2016

**István Hegedűs**  
**Györgyi Kocsis**  
**Kata Nagy**  
**András Schweitzer**  
**Zsófia Stahl**  
**Erzsébet Strausz**  
**Erik Uszkiewicz**  
**Zsuzsanna Végh**  
**Zsófia Vidák**

and

**Alena Krempaska**  
**Christian Kvorning Lassen**  
**Peter Weisenbacher**

## Table of Contents

Introduction .....	1
1. Strangers and strange lands – the Eastern „compassion deficit” .....	2
2. Expert survey .....	6
3. The refugee and migration crisis through the Visegrad lens .....	16
3.1. Confrontations within, allies outside the EU .....	17
3.2. United stands Visegrad? .....	19
4. The case of Hungary .....	22
4.1. In the labyrinth of refugee-numbers .....	22
4.2. Legal and technical measures against asylum .....	23
4.3. The political arena .....	29
4.3.1. Government: Political Games in an “Illiberal Democracy” .....	29
4.3.2. The opposition and the media under pressure .....	34
4.4. The response of the civil society.....	36
5. The case of Slovakia .....	43
5.1. Government-hopes for re-election .....	43
5.2. Rise of the far-right.....	45
5.3. Behind the rise of the far right.....	46
6. The case of the Czech Republic.....	50
6.1. Fear of the unknown .....	50
6.2. Root Causes of Resistance.....	52
6.3. The fear of the known unknown.....	53
Conclusions .....	55
Selected literature .....	58

## List of Figures

Figure 1: How are people leaving Syria and other conflict zones usually referred to in the media?.....	7
Figure 2: The dominant position of the main actors towards refugees in V4 countries (Scale 1 is „migrant-phobic” 5 is „refugee-friendly”, 6 is used for „don’t know”)......	7
Figure 3: Has your government supported Angela Merkel’s policy? .....	8
Figure 4: What has the government emphasised more during the refugee crisis? .....	8
Figure 5: Have politicians in your country used anti-EU rhetoric in order to „save” the nation from migrants? .....	9
Figure 6: What were the main motivations of the government’s refugee policy? .....	9
Figure 7: Has your government been an initiator or rather a follower to the common V4 positions in relation to the refugee crisis at the European stage in 2015/2016? .....	10
Figure 8: Has the civil society in your country responded to the refugee crisis? .....	10
Figure 9: How important are the following social fears in rejecting refugees/immigrants from the Middle East and from Africa in your country? (Scale 1-5, where 1 is not important at all and 5 is very important.) .....	12
Figure 10: If a similar number of Christian refugees would have to be absorbed from the same regions, would they be more accepted in your society? (Scale of 1-5, where 1 is „they would be totally refused” and 5 is „they would be very warmly welcome”)......	13

## Introduction

During the early months of 2016, the Hungarian Europe Society started to implement its project called “The Refugee Crisis and the Reactions of the Visegrad Countries”. The project included comprehensive and comparative research in the four countries as well as a one-day workshop in Budapest. Experts of the Hungarian Europe Society and further researchers from the Czech Republic, Poland, Slovakia and Hungary examined the various – political, legal, social and cultural – aspects of the unprecedented phenomenon of the previous year, that is the mass inflow of mostly Muslim asylum seekers from the Middle East into Europe and the way the V4 countries – all members of the European Union - responded to it. By September 2016, individual case studies have been completed focusing on different dimensions of the subject matter – they can be found as attachments to this report.

The following text gives a concise summary of the most important findings of the project with a strong emphasis on Hungary as the main point of entry for refugees towards the Western part of Europe. We begin with the historic-cultural impact on the handling of the crisis in the Central European region, followed by the analysis of an expert survey managed by the Hungarian Europe Society, then, the analysis of the new characteristics of the Visegrad cooperation regarding the migration problem follows. The next chapter is about the “front-country” Hungary: this case has been investigated thoroughly also because of the central role the country played during the peak of the crisis and also since its government’s rhetoric and measures represent the most radical anti-thesis to the crisis management of the European institutions and the German government. At the end of our report, summaries of the Slovak and Czech situation can be read – since Poland remained practically untouched from the crisis, there is no special case study about the Polish development.

## 1. Strangers and strange lands – the Eastern „compassion deficit”

The arrival of the heavily barbed-wired “Mad Max train” which rolled in to close the fence on Hungary’s Serbian border on Sept 15, 2015 was a gesture that stood in stark opposition to the Refugees Welcome demonstrations and actual reception of refugees in Germany, Sweden and elsewhere in the European Union. Very soon Polish, Czech and Slovak guards arrived to Hungary to form joint patrols to defend the newly erected fence. Visegrad countries one after another declared their unwillingness to accept the quota system introduced by the EU in September 2015 to reallocate refugees within the EU. In October a government initiated referendum will take place in Hungary with its original intention to “send a clear message to Brussels” that the Hungarian people reject the “forced settlement” of “illegal” immigrants.

Analysts of the shut door policy usually view it as being heartless (insane on moral grounds), sometimes also as mindless (insane on rational, economic grounds). As for the former, they discuss the current refugee question in a historical context – finding a direct contradiction between how the V4 states behave and how they ought to be based on their own experiences.

The oft-repeated inverse connection between the hostile attitude of the Eastern European nations towards refugees and the fact that they were once mass-producers of emigrants who were generally welcome in Western countries is perhaps best expressed last September by the then rector of the Central European University. He was the one to call this “historical amnesia”. “During and long after World War II, millions in the region have sought to escape from oppression and genocide — from Soviet tanks in 1956 and 1968, and from brutal conflicts in the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s. Why have Hungary and other European countries forgotten that many of their own citizens were once refugees?” Moreover, what is much less known, a significant number of people actually found refuge in Syria during the Second World War.

Another argument questions the economic rationality of the decisions. East Europe, with its ageing population, desperately needs the young workforce that could re-balance its

demographic decline and put their economies and their pension systems on a sustainable track. East Europeans would also be wise to harbour the immigrant talents. After all they should all know hundreds of emigration stories, like that of András Gróf, the Hungarian refugee who arrived illegally in Austria without a college degree and with only 20 dollars in his pocket, then ten years later became Andy Grove, co-creator of Intel.

Why don't these arguments echo in East Europe?

First of all, because the heartening stories of the Western welcome of emigrants are not very often told. The narrative of the 200 thousand Hungarians who fled to the West after the failed Hungarian revolution of 1956 is not part of the Hungarian historical consciousness. Naturally, words about what happened to those who “betrayed their land” or about their welcome, were censored from the media during Communism, and the topic did not become a much talked about one after 1989 either.

But whenever the issue of the similarity between emigrants from the region and refugees arriving is raised, it is usually rejected by locals. People here generally don't view the comparison valid. They rather view the refugees as “others”, as being “different”, and their flight as being unjustified compared to those who had fled Communism, or the rage of a foreign Superpower. As an obscure, apparently government sponsored English language Hungarian blog put it: „ the 200,000 Hungarians who decided to leave their homes in 1956 tried everything in order to integrate into the host countries' society: they respected the local laws, kept order, and fulfilled their obligations.” as opposed to those coming today, who: “make damages [sic], revolt against the police, organise demonstrations, fail to comply with their obligations, and even rape women.” It also hints that these people, unlike Hungarians in 1956, go for the higher living standards and unemployment benefits.

Countless explanations for East Europe's “compassion deficit” has been quoted by observers: from the relative lack of economic resources which to social insecurity and fear of losing national sovereignty vis-à-vis Brussels that is sometimes talked of as the new Moscow.

Another important factor seems to be the contrasting developments in nation-building in the East and the West, and the divergent view of the “nation” and “national territory” as a result.

In the Eastern half of the continent ethnically diverse empires held sway. With the collapse of these empires and the subsequent bitter conflicts that characterized the *Kleinstaaterei* that followed, diversity came to be viewed as problematic, which can lead to the disintegration of states. The Hungarian Trianon trauma, like the Munich syndrome implanted suspicion towards any nationalities different from the “nation-constituting” one in Hungary and Czechoslovakia respectively.

Tragic international developments and the interference of great-powers fortified the xenophobic tendencies by the mid-twentieth century, resulting in the almost total extermination of the region’s Jewish population, and the expulsion of many millions of German inhabitants. The disintegration of Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia resulted in an East-Central Europe more ethnically homogeneous than ever in its history.

Western societies in the meantime (especially after the Second World War) experienced a time of decentralization, federalization, and economic immigration conducive to the national economy. Ethnic, religious and cultural diversity increased fortifying the understanding of the “nation as a civil-political phenomenon. Germans, generally acknowledging their tragic past of Nazism as being connected to extreme ethno-nationalism, now also adhere to the civic-political nation concept. This means that it is infinitely more difficult for a Hungarian or a Slovak than for a German or British to imagine that Muslim Syrian refugees may become full members of their nation.

Some of the above explanations may be understood as being the specific characteristics of the political and cultural elites of the region.

James Dawson and Seán Hanley opined that the unwelcoming attitude has to do with the contribution of East Central Europe’s mainstream parties of ‘liberals’ who are better at winning elections than at being liberal. „In contexts defined by legacies of authoritarian communism and Christian conservatism, no pro-European party has ever tried to lead public

opinion - or foster new, more liberal national identities - by consistently embracing liberal norms such as civic tolerance and pluralism” and “The liberalism of East Central European political mainstream has been an ersatz product. It has failed, when tested, to stand up for ideals of an inclusive plural society now because it never really stood for them in the first place – unless directly mandated by EU conditionalities.”

The argument of the East-Central European political leadership is that they are simply acting according to the *volonté populaire*. They were more responsive to popular fears, they did not want to educate the people but to act in their favour and to represent them, they. The rise of the anti-refugee sentiments in Western societies may mean that Eastern governments just smelled danger earlier than their Western counterparts. It was hinted that with new policies being implemented by Western governments and developments such as the EU-Turkey deal, the divide might turn out to exist only temporarily.

So far, however, there is a clear divide not only on the government level, but in popular perceptions too. European Parliament Eurobarometer published in October 2015 showed that there indeed is a clear difference in the Eastern and Western half of the continent when it comes to accepting refugees or the common European quota system. An EU average of 51% of respondents said their countries "need legal migrants to work in certain sectors of the economy", ranging from 72-77% in Germany, Denmark and Sweden and 70% in the UK, to 19-25% in Slovakia, Bulgaria, Hungary and the Czech Republic). Western societies divided, Eastern societies are almost uniform in rejection.

Refugee-phobia is more widespread in Eastern countries on the popular level too. This corresponds to yearly results of the World Value Survey: that the Eastern societies are more closed where survival values dominate over self-expression values. Government propaganda (e.g. the infamous Hungarian poster campaign of 2015 addressing refugees in Hungarian, or the sheer fear-mongering one of 2016 preceding the October 2 referendum) may be effective in inciting hatred against refugees, but a comparatively significant level of ignorance, lack of solidarity and intolerance has already been a detectable feature of the region. Eastern fear from refugees is thus both government induced and abused.



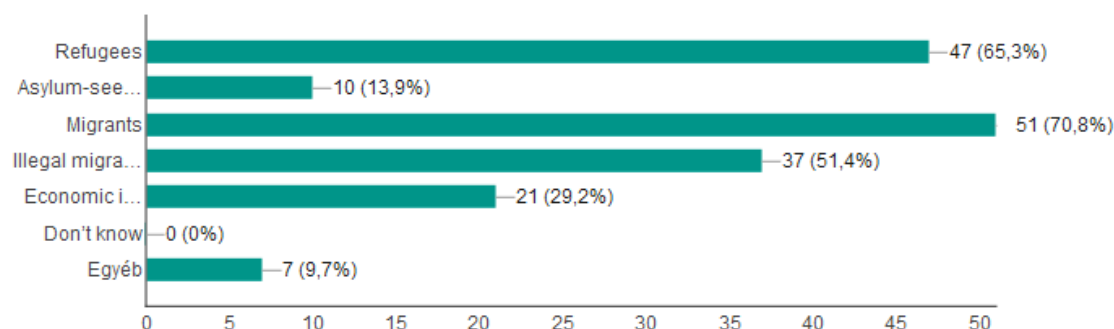
## 2. Expert survey

To supplement the thematic analytical work of our research project the expert group of the HES in consultation with our partners compiled a comprehensive basic questionnaire in order to map out and identify basic similarities and differences among Visegrad 4 countries in terms of their responses given to the current European migration crisis. The main fields we intended to cover included among others the decisive aspects of the relevant domestic political landscapes and the related historical background, the Visegrad Cooperation, the emerging civic engagement and of course the basic characteristics of the migrants arriving and passing through the V4 countries.

We have invited some 200 selected people to fill out our questionnaire, of whom 72 complied with 41 % of them completing both parts of the questionnaire. The composition of the respondents' nationality looks quite balanced; 29 % of them being Polish, also 29 % Hungarian, 25 % Czech while 16 % of the respondents were Slovaks. Despite of the relatively high proportion of the answers we naturally do not consider our findings representative in any of the possible aspects due to the qualitative nature of our approach. At the same time however we are convinced that our method can provide a useful orientation point for the further elaboration of our common research project.

The most important questions and findings of the expert survey were the following:

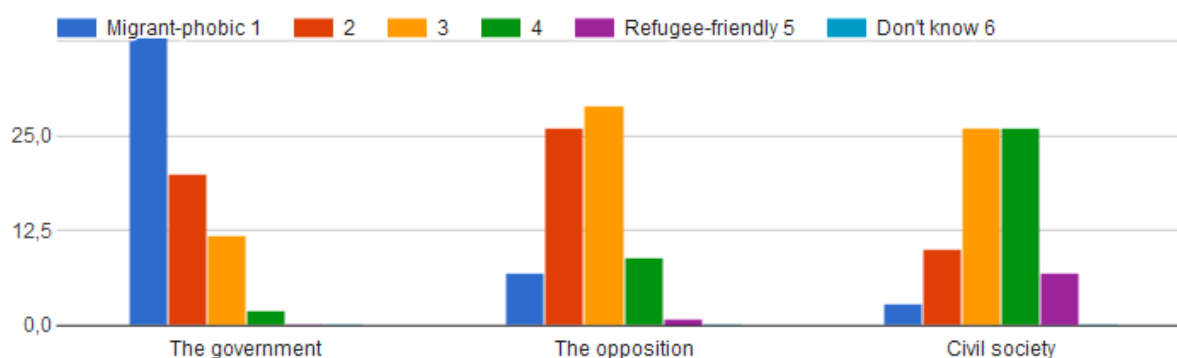
Figure 1: How are people leaving Syria and other conflict zones usually referred to in the media?



According to the answers received migrants arriving from the conflict zones were **most usually referred to by the media as migrants (71%) and as refugees (65%)** while the label of **illegal migrants** was also rather frequently used (51%). Less used terms were economic immigrant (29%) and asylum-seekers (14%).

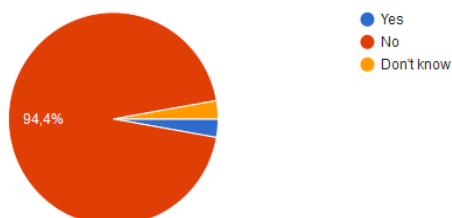
The answers to our question about **the dominant position of the main political actors in the V4 countries towards the current migrant wave** reflect the divide between the stance of the government and that of the opposition, as well as the civil society. On a scale of 1-5, i.e. from „migrant-phobic” (1) to „refugee-friendly” (5) the most characteristic negative view belonged to the government, considered to be migrant-phobic by a bit more than half (53 %) of the respondents and close to it (scale degree 2) by a further 28 %.

Figure 2: The dominant position of the main actors towards refugees in V4 countries (Scale 1 is „migrant-phobic” 5 is „refugee-friendly”, 6 is used for „don't know”.)



Close to all respondents (94 %) claimed that the policy of **Angela Merkel was not supported** by their government.

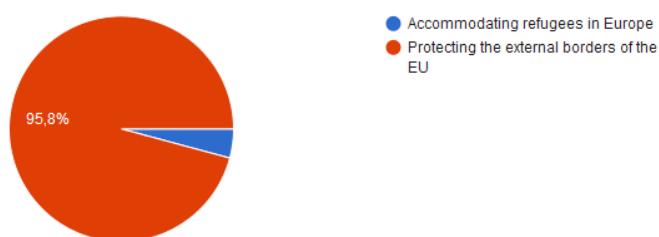
Figure 3: Has your government supported Angela Merkel's policy?



The further accommodation of Angela Merkel's policy by the V4 government was not crystal clear to our experts. Although more than half of them stated that their respective government attempted to develop **alternative propositions to the German position at the European level**, 36 % of them were not aware of such an initiative at all

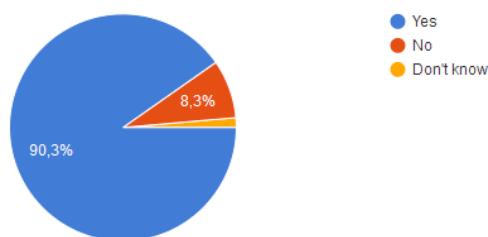
Another question shows much more clearly how the dilemma described above was handled by the V4 governments. According to close to all (96 %) respondents the **government's rhetoric of saving the European Union was limited** to the issue of **protecting the external borders** of the EU, whereas shared European values, such as accommodating refugees in Europe were practically completely neglected.

Figure 4: What has the government emphasised more during the refugee crisis?



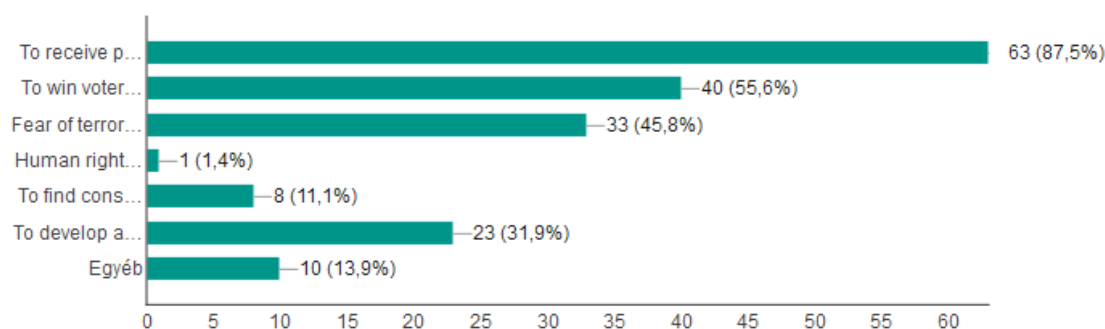
Not only neglected European values but clear **anti-EU rhetoric of the politicians was experienced by 90%** of the responding experts in the V4 countries.

Figure 5: Have politicians in your country used anti-EU rhetoric in order to „save” the nation from migrants?



The governments’ manoeuvres are also reflected in the answers to the question concerning the **main motivations of the governments’ refugee policy** in 2015.

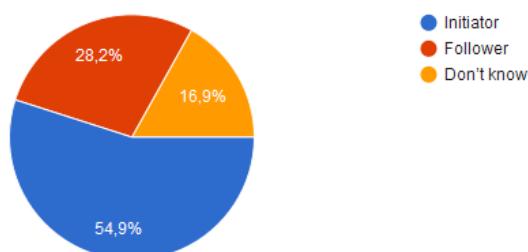
Figure 6: What were the main motivations of the government’s refugee policy?



Professional deliberations, such as human rights approach (1,4 %) or finding consensus inside the European crisis management (11%) were among the least often identified motivation. Even the otherwise widely used government argument referring to the threat of terrorism and to security concerns were mentioned by less than half (46 %) of our experts. At the same time the far most characteristic motivations were seen to be those related to simple – and well known - domestic political considerations, namely to receive popular/electoral support (88 %) and to win voters over from the extremist parties (56 %). We can add that the same distribution of the motives was attributed to the opposition parties as well but to only much lesser extent.

As to the Visegrad cooperation, more than half of the questioned claimed that their government was rather an initiator than a follower of the **V4 positions** regarding the refugee crisis.

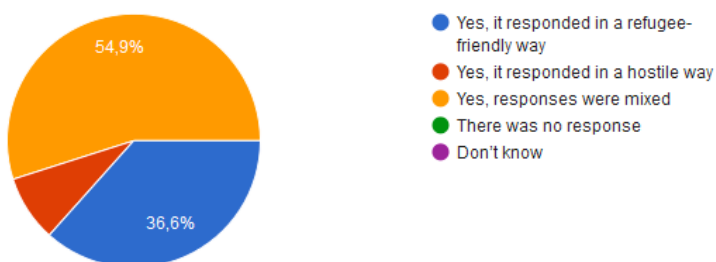
**Figure 7: Has your government been an initiator or rather a follower to the common V4 positions in relation to the refugee crisis at the European stage in 2015/2016?**



It is probable, that there was essentially no need to be an initiator, because the ideas of the V4 governments pointed to the same direction from default. This is proven by the fact that the „initiators” – according to the replies – mostly put forward identical elements to the common policy, both in practical and in ideological terms, namely: protection of external borders, objection against mandatory refugee quotas and hotspots, supporting border-fences, legal challenges of the EU-decisions, the defence of Christian Europe and supporting intervention in the Syrian war.

The **response of civil society** to the refugee crisis was ambivalent in the V4 during the period. Although 37 percent of the responses reported „refugee-friendly” attitudes, 54 percent said they were „mixed”, although only 6 percent claimed that they have been outright hostile.

**Figure 8: Has the civil society in your country responded to the refugee crisis?**



An insight is given to this phenomenon by **how the refugees were portrayed in the public discourse, including the social media**. The Polish answers reflected the general attitude of society as not open for Muslims, regarding refugees as potential terrorists, thieves, economic migrants, parasites, Muslim hordes, foreign invaders, incompatible Islamists mostly, with a weakening minority pointing out that there are doctors, engineers, brain-surgeons and other well educated people among the Syrians, who have dignity and had suffered police brutality in their homeland. In Poland the civil society connected with the Catholic Church and left-liberal political movements influenced the public discourse in a refugee-friendly way, but the public media instructed and managed by the government has been rather hostile to refugees.

In Hungary the overall picture has been quite similar. While a big and successful refugee-helper group had been founded on Facebook during the summer of 2015 as a civic initiative, the deep political division of the country strongly influenced the public discourse on refugees as well, the refugee-unfriendly part of society labelled as „Nazis” by the other, and the previous labelling the latter as „refugee-lovers”. In all the 4 countries public media mostly portrayed refugees in negative terms and stereotypes, often with racist and Islamophobic attitudes, highlighting the ”uncrossable” divide between Christianity and Islam, using xenophobic language to frame the crisis (economic migrants in designer clothes and smartphones, healthy young men who should fight for their own countries, young men coming to take benefits and teach Islam, not suitable to accept local values, fundamentalists, exporting jihadist ideology, stoking war of civilizations against white people and their values, rapers, culturally different, barbaric, dirty intruders, underminers of social cohesion). It is remarkable, that the public media almost exclusively portrayed men rather than families, refugees shown as a homogeneous group, lacking individual stories. This negative image was also spread by the tabloid media, while broadsheets were somewhat more nuanced. In Poland there have been a number of civil initiatives to welcome refugees with the help of a part of the Catholic Church following the sentence of Pope Francis, but a significant part of the clergy have been speaking of refugees as the incarnation of evil.

**Figure 9: How important are the following social fears in rejecting refugees/immigrants from the Middle East and from Africa in your country? (Scale 1-5, where 1 is not important at all and 5 is very important.)**

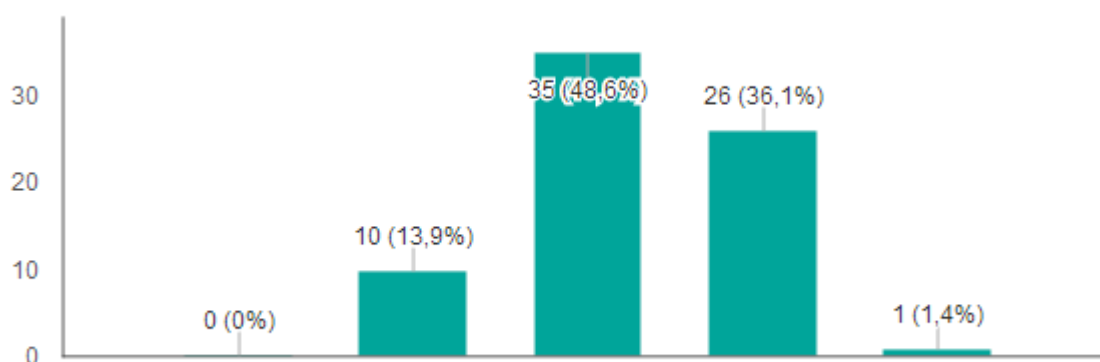
Social fears	Average score
Refugees/immigrants pose a cultural risk to the nation because the majority of them are Muslims.	4,52
Many refugees/immigrant might stay and take jobs that otherwise locals could have.	2,62
The arrival of refugees/immigrants would increase crimes against property.	3,62
The arrival of refugees/immigrants would increase crimes against women.	4,17
The arrival of refugees/immigrants would increase the risk of terrorism.	4,32
Refugees/immigrants would form a parallel society with own norms, institutions, legal systems.	3,91
Refugees/immigrants might slowly become the majority in some regions of the country and later claim territorial autonomy or want to secede	2,51

An important reflection of the general portrayal of refugees by the governments and the public media is, that in the V4 countries refugees are overwhelmingly rejected on a cultural basis, and not so much for economic reasons. Most of our experts considered the refugee's Muslim religion as a very important reason why people in these countries have generally denied welcoming them, moreover - not independently from this perception -, most of our respondents also had the impression, that the general public has a very strong fear of refugees committing crimes. In this latter respect the fear of terrorism is the most important factor, but it is worth mentioning that the public's fear of possible crimes against women plays a bigger role in the rejection of refugees according our experts, than fear of refugees committing

crimes against property. At the same time the data clearly show that people in the V4 countries are not really afraid that refugees could pose a threat to their jobs.

All of our respondent experts seem to be convinced: refugees would be more welcome in the V4 countries if they were Christians. On the other hand very few of them believed that even in this case the public would be very enthusiastic.

**Figure 10: If a similar number of Christian refugees would have to be absorbed from the same regions, would they be more accepted in your society? (Scale of 1-5, where 1 is „they would be totally refused” and 5 is „they would be very warmly welcome”.)**



Respondents of the survey mentioned only a few, rather spontaneous **civic actions** having provided material and mental assistance to refugees. In Slovakia, it was the Call for Humanity organization. In Hungary there were two of them (Migration Aid and Migszol). There were refugee-friendly demonstrations in Warsaw, welcoming refugees at the airport and the city centre, and „Football against Racism Cup” organized. Several NGOs in all countries gave free legal assistance for refugees. It is important to note that it was only the CR where a high level government politician – namely PM Bohuslav Sobotka – later awarded refugee-helping volunteers, although there were accounts from Slovakia too of refugee-friendly NGOs having been granted financial help by the government to support their activities. On the other end of the spectrum there were significant anti-refugee demonstrations and other hostile civic actions as well in the region (citizens „helping” the police officers to „protect” citizens from refugees in Poland, ultra nationalist groups sending paramilitary to the southern border in Hungary, protests against refugee camps by Slovakian



and Hungarian extremists is Slovakia, the creations of the „Bloc against Islam” in Poland, an organization aiming to run on the elections as well).

Respondents remarked that **refugee-friendly civic actors** found it more difficult to find each other and get organised to work in a systematic way, than refugee-hostile ones. Since NGOs have often been frightened of losing government subsidies, they tended to support grass-root refugee assistant organizations in a hidden way, whereas refugee hostile groups sometimes gained support from various political parties and politicians. Refugee-friendly organizations in Poland mostly operated among the same group of people who organise themselves also around other topics (women’s rights, LGBTQ rights, animal rights, workers’ rights), while refugee-hostile groups are close to right wing politicians, use church rhetoric, and are often associated with football clubs. In Hungary the most important refugee-hostile „NGO” is in fact a GONGO (Government Organized Non-Governmental Organization), namely CÖF, which has been founded years ago to support everything the government does. The answers also shed some light on the external connections of the different civic groups of the V4 involved in the refugee issue. It is quite clear, that many of the refugee-hostile organizations have links to the Hungarian Jobbik party, the German Pegida movement and the AfD party, as well as to the Europe of Nations and Freedom group in the European Parliament. Pro-refugee organizations are less connected trans-border: there are some links via e.g. anarchist networks, or simple individual initiatives, plus attempts to collaborate in the framework of the Refugees Welcome network, which was also somewhat assisted on the level of the European Parliament.

Respondents of the survey **could not detect much lasting impact of the civic activities** on the institutional and legal processes of their countries. A positive effect in the CR has been the clear commitment of the government to combat the extreme right and hate crimes, but probably this has to be evaluated in the light of the political battle between a right-wing, anti-refugee president and a left-wing, moderately refugee-friendly government. In the CR asylum law had been quite tight even before the refugee crisis, and they have not been changed. In Hungary pro refugee civic movements were unable to prevent the erection of the border fence by the government, nor the introduction of extremely strict asylum legislation, e.g. the

criminalization of illegal entry. Polish immigration law is not hostile to refugees, and the public administration treats foreigners well, but the Law and Justice government's rhetoric is strongly against multiculturalism and anti-Islam, appraising Viktor Orbán's politics, while society is ill informed by the mainstream media about the crisis, about Islam, and about why the people are actually fleeing from the Middle East. All in all the achievements of most V4 refugee-friendly civic organizations have been described by our respondents as more or less successful damage-control actions. The result of which was that the tense situation created by the refugee-inflows of 2015 did not escalate to open aggression, and the tide of public opinion fuelled by governments stopped short of turning outright against immigrants.

### 3. The refugee and migration crisis through the Visegrad lens

While Italy was already heavily affected by the increasing number of migrants and refugees reaching its shores and was barely coping with the situation by spring 2015, the refugee and migration crisis did not appear on the common Visegrad agenda as a thematizing factor until the situation on the Balkan route also got out of hand by September 2015. The earliest mentions in common positions appeared in June 2015, and although they expressed solidarity by welcoming the European Commission's European Agenda on Migration and supported – at that time – the development of a comprehensive EU framework on migration, in more concrete terms the V4 emphasized rather that the European Union would need to pay more attention to the Western Balkan route and that it should seek voluntary, not mandatory, mechanisms when considering relocation and resettlement. At this stage, however, migration was just one of many program points and not a central question for the Visegrad Group. This all turned around in September 2015, after a summer when Hungary experienced an unprecedented inflow of people, which it sought to cut by the construction of a fence along its southern borders with Croatia and Serbia.

Although fellow Visegrad members did not provide much assistance to Hungary to handle the situation over the summer, a joint position was developed in which the Visegrad countries called, among others, for the protection of the European Union's external borders also with the involvement of Frontex where necessary, reminded member states to respect the rules of Schengen, the Dublin regulations and the existing asylum *acquis*, and encouraged the EU to engage more actively in the MENA region both in terms of peace building and development in an attempt to address the root causes of the crisis. With the implicit aim of reducing the number of people arriving to the EU including the Visegrad states, the joint statement called both for the establishment of 'hotspots' outside the EU to process asylum requests and for "preserving the voluntary nature of EU solidarity measures." Furthermore, in order to promote the importance of the Western Balkans, the V4 demanded both more attention and financial support for the region.

The above points define the cornerstones of the Visegrad position to date. The idea of voluntary solidarity and the consequent Visegrad refusal of the quotas proposed by the European Commission has become one of the defining themes of the confrontations within the European Union when addressing the refugee and migration crisis. Whereas the Visegrad countries' insistence on focusing on the Western Balkan route and providing support for the countries of the region drew attention to a new dimension of the crisis, it also provided an opportunity for the Visegrad states to argue that they do their share in addressing the challenges the EU faces.

### **3.1. Confrontations within, allies outside the EU**

It was clear from the beginning that the position of the Visegrad countries is formulated in opposition of a group of member states calling for solidarity and advocating burden sharing in the EU, such as Italy or Greece on the transit country side and Germany or Sweden on the target country side. Reacting to the developments over the summer on the Balkan route and to the situation at Hungary's Keleti railway station in early September by announcing no limits on taking in refugees especially from Syria, Chancellor Angela Merkel's policy, the so-called German *Willkommenskultur* stood in stark contrast with the approach of the Visegrad countries – although it did not go uncontested in Germany either.

The V4's stance further solidified once the European Commission tabled its proposal on September 9, 2015, about the relocation of 120.000 refugees from frontier states (Greece, Italy and Hungary – although the latter declined participation) to other EU countries, which Visegrad countries outright refused to support. The proposal was brought to vote on September 22, 2015, on the level of the Council of Interior Ministers where it passed with qualified majority despite the negative vote of the Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia. As the Visegrad countries qualified the relocation mechanism in their September joint statement as an undesirable pull factor, it was foreseeable that they would not support such a proposal. Some date the fallout between the two "camps" back to this vote, which seems accurate considering what a thematizing impact the quota had on the Visegrad position

led particularly by Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán. Although the relocation mechanism would not have put unbearable strain on the V4 (the Czech Republic would need to take 2.691 refugees, Hungary 1.294, Poland 6.182 and Slovakia 902), both Slovakia and Hungary challenged the decision at the European Court of Justice in December 2015.

As EU countries reintroduced temporary border control within the Schengen Zone over autumn and the terror attack hit Paris in November 2015, for the sake of increasing security, the idea of a mini-Schengen was floated by the Dutch government and was discussed among like-minded countries. Fearing that such an agreement would find them outside the zone of borderless travel, the Visegrad countries spoke out against the idea by founding the “Friends of Schengen” group as well as issuing a strongly worded statement in which they again called for the protection of the external borders of the EU. Although the idea eventually fell through, it heightened tension to the extent that Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico suggested ousting Greece from the Schengen zone for it not being able to control its own borders.

While the V4’s position within the European Union gained little sympathy, the Group sought to build an alliance on dealing with migration along the Balkan route from autumn 2015 on. In an open letter published in major Western Balkan dailies in November 2015, the Visegrad prime ministers ensured readers that they continue supporting their countries’ European integration and commended the positive role of the Western Balkan countries in a refugee crisis. Subsequently, following a joint summit of Visegrad and Western Balkan foreign ministers, the V4 also pledged support for its partners – should they need it. The declarations were later followed up by concrete contributions to Macedonia, whereby the Visegrad countries sent border police to support the country’s efforts in controlling its border with Greece.

Interestingly, however, while the Western Balkan countries enjoyed the V4’s rhetoric – and to some extent practical – support throughout the refugee and migration crisis positioning them somewhat as an underdog that deserves help nonetheless, Turkey at the feet of the route received a different treatment. It was not until after the EU-Turkey Action Plan was adopted that the Visegrad countries mentioned Turkey in their joint communication in relation to the

refugee and migration crisis as a significant actor in the matter, and even this notice suggested rather mistrust – which however is not a unique sentiment in the context of the crisis. The Visegrad statement called for the development of a plan B, should Turkey fail to curb migratory flows, and the desire to reduce dependence on Turkey has not disappeared to date.

### 3.2. United stands Visegrad?

Whereas the Visegrad Group is often seen as one unified platform on the issue of migration in the European Union, the intensity with which each country has approached the matter is different and can be explained by the governing parties' ideological stance, as well as domestic political dynamics, social perceptions also influenced by the countries' geographical location. Being at the immediate northern end of the Western Balkan route, it is no surprise that Hungary has appeared to take leadership on the issue among the four and was the loudest representative of its own and of the joint Visegrad position within the EU. The expert survey conducted by the Hungarian Europe Society in spring 2016 also reflected this perception: about 90 percent of Hungarian respondents considered their country the initiator of the common Visegrad position, whereas less than 50 percent of Czech, Polish and Slovak respondents thought about their respective countries in the same manner. Those respondents who perceived their country as an initiator, however, generally put forward the same point they considered their respective governments initiated as part of the common Visegrad position. This suggests that the priorities of all four countries – as portrayed domestically – were very much in line with each other across the region. In all four cases, saying no to mandatory quota topped the list of mentions to be followed by the emphasis on border protection.

Although common positions were formulated throughout the past year, divisions were present within the Visegrad Group from the beginning. After the strongly communicated first joint statement on migration in September 2015, the vote in the Council of Interior Ministers already caused cracks on the image of a united Visegrad. Despite the coordinated position,

Poland decided to vote in favour of the relocation mechanism in a step motivated predominantly by political considerations ahead of the parliamentary elections where the Ewa Kopacz-led Civic Platform (PO) government stood to lose against the Law and Justice (PiS) party. Although the new PiS government initially committed itself to fulfil the obligations the PO-government undertook, after the Brussels attack in March 2016, Prime Minister Beata Szydło refused to take in refugees to Poland. With this orientation, and considering the political sympathies between PiS-led Poland and Fidesz-led Hungary, the two countries have come to form the core of the V4 alliance on migration. The rhetoric of the two countries by now contains very similar core elements, such as the need to protect the Christian heritage of Europe from Muslims.

Having taken the relocation quota to court in December 2015, Slovakia also forms part of the group of sceptics. In fact, Prime Minister Robert Fico even built up his party's (SMER-SD) electoral campaign on the slogan of defending Slovakia from the migrants for the parliamentary elections in March 2016. In his case, however, this strategy backfired and contributed rather to the rise of the extreme right in the country landing the Slovak National Party and Marian Kotleba's People's Party Our Slovakia in parliament. Following these developments and taking over the Presidency of the Council of the EU in July 2016, Prime Minister Fico toned down his rhetoric to some extent, but in its core elements he still stands by the common Visegrad position.

The country among the four that took a different path is clearly the Czech Republic that decided to implement the common EU decision on the relocation scheme although it had previously voted against it in the Council. Nevertheless, as it filled the presidency of the Visegrad Group between July 2015 and June 2016, it was still in charge of formulating and representing the Visegrad Group's joint position exactly during the period when the so far most formative decisions have been taken in the EU concerning the crisis. At the same time, the relocation from Italy and Greece is going slowly: as of September 26, 2016, the Czech Republic only made 50 places available from the 2.679, and only 12 refugees have been relocated to the country from Greece.

Finally, it should be not be overlooked that despite the proximity of (the majority of) the Visegrad countries' position on migration, the Group has its broader disagreements on a variety of issues that have not disappeared nor have been resolved. The most pressing case in point – to highlight just one – is the diverging opinions in the Visegrad Group about the role of Russia in Central and Eastern European security originating from the different threat perceptions these countries harbour with regards to their eastern neighbourhood. Consequently, their approach on how the European Union should deal with Russia's actions in Ukraine differ starkly, which could lead to disagreements among them in the not so distant future when the discussion on the continuation of EU sanctions on Russia will be due.



## 4. The case of Hungary

### 4.1. In the labyrinth of refugee-numbers

The number of asylum seekers coming to or through Hungary started to grow slightly in 2013, then, decreased radically by the summer of 2014. From this time much more non-European refugees started to arrive. Afterwards, in the frame of the so-called refugee or migrant crisis, triggered by the conflict in Syria (by far the biggest driver of migration), the ongoing violence in Afghanistan and Iraq, abuses in Eritrea, as well as poverty in Kosovo, a larger migration wave reached Hungary and the system seemed to collapse. The statistics of the Immigration Office of Hungary are considerably misleading (mainly because the categories they use are not evident,<sup>23</sup> but it seems that Hungarian authorities have been issued less and less permits yearly of any kind of residence, even permanent ones while rejecting more and more applications and ordering more detention. The number of people that “have an identity card as a refugee” was around the same in 2013 and 2014 (cca. 1600) and people with a “subsidiary protected” status were around 1000 in both years. Despite that fact that the Syrian and the other above mentioned conflicts are far from resolved, the Immigration Office expelled twice more refugees in 2014 than the year before, and ordered eight times more expulsions in case of non European asylum seekers in 2015. Against this background, it is interesting to note that during the same time the total number of expulsions ordered by the Hungarian court decreased by 30%. By September 2015, out of the altogether 177.000 registered asylum seekers more than 150.000 were non Europeans (mainly Syrian and Afghan), that presents a striking growth (785%) compared to the previous year. At the same time, the Heinrich Böll Stiftung Study states: “the radical increase in asylum seeker numbers does not mean that, compared to previous years, significantly more applicants have received refugee status. In fact, by year-end it had become virtually impossible to receive asylum protection in Hungary due to new restrictions. Compared to the previous year, the approval numbers decreased and stayed below 0.5 % in 2015, 98 % are dropped, indicating that the asylum seekers leave Hungary before a decision can be handed down in their cases.” No wonder that from this huge number of refugees crossing the country, less than 100 receive

a refugee status a year – this number increased to around 170 22 by the end of the year. 375 people got acknowledged as a “subsidiary protected person or were allowed to stay due to humanitarian reasons. The rest have been expelled or been still in detention, waiting for a decision in their case. A small part is waiting in refugee camps, while others (including vulnerable groups, such as women and children) are vegetating in “guarded quarters” among terrible conditions. This year (2016) 75% less refugees (60% less non-European) were registered by the Hungarian authorities, around 25 thousand people. However, by June only 1868 had an identity card as a refugee in Hungary. Mainly Afghan, Syrian, Irani and Iraqi asylum seekers got acknowledged as a refugee (in total 96 people got the status this year by the end of July). 165 other people were acknowledged as a subsidiary protected person. On the other hand, the authorities ordered detention in the case of 1964 refugees (558 Afghans and 120 Syrians). In 2011, before the great refugee wave 1562 registered refugees were living in Hungary. Since that this number only raised to 1868. As UNHCR Hungary stated: “nearly half a million people crossed through Hungarian territory at the height of the refugee crisis last summer but although 177,000 were registered here, just 500 have been granted asylum. Over 1,000 are in detention for illegal border crossing and likely to be deported.”

## 4.2. Legal and technical measures against asylum

It seems that the Hungarian government did everything in its power to act as the ‘sole defender of Europe’, be it the European external borders or the European culture, while also respecting international obligations (including the European asylum *acquis*), as if its words and deeds were in harmony. However, in reality the new border regime, rooted in a well-orchestrated and by public money financed hate campaign, raised serious concerns. It has been severely criticised by international human rights organizations and intergovernmental bodies in charge of human rights such as the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), the Council of Europe and ODIHR – the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights.

Facing the enormous increase in the number of Syrian, Afghan and other non-European asylum seekers, authorities tried to register applications until mid-summer of 2015. Due to a

lack of systemic controls within the Schengen area, asylum-seekers in practice remained free to leave Hungary for other Schengen countries. Tumultuous scenes took place at the railway stations of Budapest, as Hungarian authorities no longer allowed migrants to board trains for Austria and Germany in August 2015, while later transported the crowd to the Austrian border. Given the lack of official support, refugees and other migrants significantly depended on the mercy of NGO activism. By September 2015 the average number of irregular border crossers through the Serbian-Hungarian border reached some 2,000 per day, a figure that sharply increased just before the barbed-wire fence along the 175 km long border section was completed on 15 September. Due to a similar fence erected at 16 October at the Croatian-Hungarian border, the figure dropped again sharply from 6,000 persons per day of late September and early October. Roughly 390,000 persons were subject to alien law measures at Hungary's external borders between January and October 2015, while the submitted asylum applications during that period were only around 200,000 – such gap indicates the order of magnitude of those assisted to travel onward without any registration. Drastic measures such as sealing the border with razor-wire fences have received wide scale international criticism, including by the European Parliament and the UNHCR.

The statistics presented below show that even before 2015 asylum seekers faced a high rate of rejection of their applications in Hungary, but the increasing institutional hostility toward them took a new level with the 2015 legal changes in the domestic legislation. The legal and practical framework of refugee protection was practically dismantled. The combined and intended effect of the steps discussed below was to deter and limit people who need international protection from accessing it in Hungary.

In July 2015, Hungary amended its asylum legislation in various aspects - including the Hungarian Asylum Act, its implementing Asylum Government Decree - and adopted a National List of Safe Countries. The latter included, among others, Serbia. This decision contradicted the UNHCR's position, according to which Serbia is not a safe third country for asylum-seekers, the guidelines of the Hungarian Supreme Court (*Kúria*) and the reports of the Hungarian Helsinki Committee (HHC) and Amnesty International. There was also a widespread resistance in the academic sector against designating Serbia as a safe third

country. The amendment to accelerate and simplify the refugee status determination procedure that entered into force on 1 August 2015, combined the safe third country rule (in the government's view applicable to Serbia) with a procedure conducted and completed right at the border in specifically established installations. This legal step provided basically for a "blanket authorization to reject 99% of asylum claims at first glance". Major blows to the rule of law were delivered by the lack of an effective remedy and limited judicial review; by curtailing deadlines for the authorities to decide an asylum-seeker's case and for the applicant to legally challenge a negative decision; by denying suspensive effect of any appeal in most of the accelerated procedures and in respect of the ineligible applications – with the exception of the application of the safe third country rule, meaning that in a great number of cases persons may be removed from the country before the first judicial review even starts; and by expanding possible places of detention in potentially worse conditions. "Asylum detention" as a specific regime for the detention of asylum-seekers was already introduced in Hungary in July 2013. Since then, as a rather unique policy in Europe, over 8,000 first-time asylum-seekers have been detained in asylum jails in inadequate detention conditions for several weeks or months. Now the amended legislation explicitly referred to the possibility of keeping asylum-seekers in asylum detention even during the judicial review procedure. According to the current Hungarian asylum law, asylum seekers and migrants may be detained in three different ways: detained following conviction for irregular border crossing (to be discussed below), detained as rejected asylum seekers, and detained while their asylum claims are determined – they could be placed in prison-like, clearly overburdened detention centres as long as 12 months while their cases pending. It should be noted, that under the Dublin III Regulation, Member States should not hold a person in detention for the sole reason that (s)he has applied for asylum.

The above mentioned measures went hand in hand with reducing the Hungarian reception system's capacity to offer shelter to asylum-seekers by closing the largest camp and instead opening smaller, temporary tent camps. Notwithstanding an ever-increasing influx of asylum-seekers since 2013 and significant amounts of EU-funding, the Hungarian government has

failed to properly extend the country's reception capacities. The open reception centres for asylum-seekers have become extremely overcrowded in Hungary by mid-2015.

The next round of amendments adopted by the Hungarian Parliament at an extraordinary session on 4 September 2015 provided for a specific regime for asylum-seekers coming across the fenced external border. These amendments deprived the asylum-seeker of elementary human rights guarantees, and provided the legal basis for the “securitisation en large”. The second major amendment to the Act on Asylum, which entered into force on 15 September 2015, designated the barbed wire dual fence (which was about to be completed at the Serbian-Hungarian border) as a “temporary security border closure” and by also amending the Criminal Code, the illegal crossing of the fence was deemed as a criminal act, punishable with a maximum by three years of imprisonment (damaging the fence became a separate crime). However, according to Article 31 of the 1951 Geneva Convention, criminal prosecution of an asylum seeker for illegal entry cannot take place before his or her claim has been adjudicated. This means that the amended Criminal Code violates the Geneva Convention. Many asylum experts in their V4 survey responses also raised concern about the fact that for crimes related to the irregular crossing of the fence migrants have been tried in expedited criminal trials lacking procedural guarantees.

Furthermore, the above mentioned amendment, by introducing the notion of “crisis situation caused by mass immigration” also entitled the government to declare a nation-wide state of emergency if certain statistical conditions are met (e.g. more than 500 migrants seek asylum per day for a month). The government swiftly declared the state of emergency on 15 September 2015 and has prolonged it ever since, despite the previously illustrated sharp drop in the numbers of immigrants after Hungary sealed its southern frontiers. Mixing the refugee crisis with terrorism, this measure practically grants a ‘carte blanche’ to the government in suspending civic rights.

In addition, “transit zones” have been established, actually as parts of the fence. They consist of a series of containers, where people who wish to seek asylum in Hungary should apply and be registered, but not all would be let in the country. A judge or a court clerk in a “court

hearing room” may only be present via an internet link. Further to the many hundreds waiting at the transit zones for managed entry, amid degrading conditions, would-be asylum seekers also have to wait for long periods to let alone enter the transit zones. In early 2016 their number was in the dozens every day, but with the improved weather conditions, since early summer there are again hundreds of people waiting. The Hungarian immigration office only lets in 30 people each day, giving priority to vulnerable families. Hungarian authorities provide only a water faucet and one food package each day. Despite the fact that these people are waiting on Hungarian land within arm’s reach of the authorities, only UNHCR, NGOs and volunteer groups have been trying to meet all other needs: medical assistance, clothing, shelter, hot meals and information. Since July 5 2016, the police can push back migrants who are apprehended within 8 km inside Hungary of the border fence to the other side of it, without any substantive procedure. Not surprisingly, most asylum-seekers abandon their asylum claims within a few days and continue to travel further to Western Europe via Austria.

In the above mentioned ‘amendment round’, also a new border procedure was introduced. It is only applicable in the transit zones and may only be extended to the admissibility phase (in case of persons with special needs, even the admissibility procedure should be conducted “in the normal way”). The new border procedure combines detention without court control nevertheless in an extremely rapid procedure that entails no meaningful access to legal assistance or to real legal remedies. The practical consequence of the new scheme was that persons without special needs were supposed to wait for the outcome of the admissibility procedure in the transit zone. All the applications submitted by persons who came through Serbia were declared inadmissible on safe-third-country grounds. Only very few persons asked for judicial review. All others were expelled and physically “accompanied” by a police officer to the Serbian border, a few meters from the door of the “transit zone” container, expecting the refused persons to illegally cross the green border in the return direction and re-enter Serbia. These measures seem to violate EU law on many points, “from the very concrete rules on access to information and legal assistance to the very abstract principles of effective remedy and due process.”

It could be concluded that as from 15 September 2015, Hungary has not only refused to grant asylum to those who apply for it and need protection, but also would not even let such persons enter its territory. Those who do manage to enter Hungary are rejected and punished according to the rules of the state of emergency imposed by the Government in the counties at the southern border. This conclusion is supported by the fact that the European Commission first communicated its concerns in October to the Government about the new immigration laws introduced in August and September, and opened an infringement procedure against Hungary on 10 December 2010. Firstly, regarding the asylum procedures, the Commission is concerned that there is no possibility to refer to new facts and circumstances in the context of appeals and that Hungary is not automatically suspending decisions in case of appeals - effectively forcing applicants to leave their territory before the time limit for lodging an appeal expires, or before an appeal has been heard. Secondly, the Commission is concerned the Hungarian law on fast-tracked criminal proceedings for irregular border crossings does not respect provisions of the Directive on the right to interpretation and translation in criminal proceedings, which ensures that every suspect or accused person who does not understand the language of the proceedings is provided with a written translation of all essential documents, including any judgment. Thirdly, on the fundamental right to an effective remedy and to a fair trial under Article 47 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU, there are concerns as to the fact that under the new Hungarian law dealing with the judicial review of decisions rejecting an asylum application a personal hearing of the applicants is optional. Judicial decisions taken by court secretaries (a sub-judicial level) lacking judicial independence also seem to be in breach of the Asylum Procedures Directive and Article 47 of the Charter.

It should be also highlighted that even persons who have been granted protection status (less than 300 persons between January and August 2016, including both refugees and persons with a subsidiary protection) would find themselves in a very problematic situation, risking even homelessness and destitution 30 days after they were given permission to stay, as on 1 June 2016 state support for refugee integration was nearly eliminated, all financial benefits were cut and access to state health care curbed. Essentially, the EU and UNHCR funds - that

support the relevant NGOs in their work - are what keep the limited integration services for refugees above water in Hungary.

In the view of the asylum experts responded to the survey of this project, Hungary basically knocked down its asylum system via building fences, making institutionally almost impossible to hand in any asylum application and disregarding any humanitarian aspect. In other words, Hungary treats almost all of the refugees as illegal criminals, who need to be incarcerated and/or pushed back by all possible means. Major refugee centres have been closed down, and some temporary ones have been established. The professional staff has not been developed and even partially reduced. The Hungarian government has massively increased the amount of money spent on the migrant crisis. However, it has increased the spending on law enforcement, border patrolling and fence building rather than creating adequate human conditions for the new arrivals. It did this belatedly, in order to generate a crisis and demonstrate its control and activism. Increasing the power of the executive with reference to the migrants should be mentioned as symbolic worst practice. It further undermines constitutionality in Hungary.

### **4.3. The political arena**

#### **4.3.1. Government: Political Games in an “Illiberal Democracy”**

On the eve of the march to commemorate the victims of the *Charlie Hebdo* assassinations in Paris on 11 January 2015, where he participated amongst the VIP international guests, Viktor Orbán gave an interview to the Hungarian state TV. As *EUObserver* quoted him, he said: “While I am PM, Hungary will definitely not become an immigration destination. We don't want to see significantly sized minorities with different cultural characteristics and backgrounds among us. We want to keep Hungary as Hungary”. He also urged the European Union to restrict access to the European continent declaring that African and Arab “economic immigration” is bad for Europe.

The populist interpretation of the murders was the beginning of a new, ongoing campaign against refugees in Hungary. Until then, immigration was a political non-issue compared to



the countries in the older part of the European Union. For most of the contemporary observers, Orbán's verbal attacks against "illegal" migration in a period when still relatively few people wanted to enter Hungary irregularly, was a desperate attempt to increase his popular support after losing two by-elections and the two-third majority of his party in the national parliament - and that was it all about.

First of all, a so-called national consultation was organised. The government requested citizens to answer a questionnaire which directly linked migration and terrorism already in its title. The twelve questions raised in the survey systematically contrasted positive and negative options, sent simplistic messages about the refugee crisis to the people and used a manipulated language in order to stipulate fear of a serious danger facing the country. For example, the fourth question was the following: *"Did you know that economic immigrants cross the border illegally and that lately their numbers have increased twentyfold?"*, whilst the most demagogue "information request" was the last one: *"Do you agree with the government that instead of allocating funds to immigration we should support Hungarian families and those children yet to be born?"*. Migszol, one of the fresh grass-root organisations created by citizens who wanted to help refugees in Hungary, called the questionnaire "a shameless piece of propaganda", explaining that "many of the questions are phrased in a way that suggests that there is a 'morally correct' answer". Leading Hungarian social scientists also protested against the insufficient methodology, the distortions of the given alternatives, and the non-representative character of the sample.

Secondly, an information campaign was launched by the government about the duties of the migrants when they enter Hungary - but the text of the messages on the billboards was in Hungarian. The impact of this action on the real targeted audience, the Hungarian citizens was relatively limited. A critical and funny counter-campaign by the small Two-Tailed Dog Party, which hanged posters after using a crowd-sourcing technique, probably contributed to the mitigation of the effects of the government propaganda. Orbán also started to talk about a re-nationalisation of the European refugee policy and blamed European leaders already during the spring of 2015. He said, for example: "Since Brussels has failed in handling

immigration, Hungary has to follow its own way in responding to the threat. We will not let economic migrants endanger Hungarian people's jobs and livelihoods”.

On 17 June 2015, contradicting to its former statements the Hungarian government unveiled its plans to build a fence at the 175 km long common border with Serbia. The Hungarian way of problem-solving - with its alarming symbolic significance and with its potential practical impact on changing the route of the refugees and pushing the burdens on others - raised concerns and hard reactions from EU member state governments like the Austrian and Italian ones. Probably the Serbian Prime Minister used the most brutal words: “Serbia will not do that, we will not close up and live in Auschwitz”, said Aleksandar Vucic. Hungarian opposition parties and many non-governmental organisations were shocked. As one of them, HES proclaimed: “We find it also disgraceful that while at the end of last year the European Commission granted an urgency support of 1,2 million euro from the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund to Hungary in order to enhance the institutional and human resource capacity of its authorities dealing with migration, instead of delivering on this, the government opted to build a fence from taxpayer's money.”

The flow of migration through Hungary gradually increased during the summer. “In August, state authorities no longer allowed migrants to board trains bound for Austria and Germany. That led to tumultuous scenes at the railway stations of Budapest, with refugees and other migrants depending on the mercy of NGO activism.” as Boldizsár Nagy, key-note speaker at our workshop formulated. When refugees made up their minds and decided to march towards Austria from Keleti station, interior minister *Pintér* said at a press conference in a cynical manner that they went for a sight-seeing in Budapest.

In early September, Orbán simply called the ongoing migration waves not a European, but a “German problem”. The political and communication gap between the German and Hungarian government became evident on 2 September 2015, “The night when Germany lost control” as *Die Zeit* called one of the most turbulent events of the crisis in its reportage one year after. Actually, Angela Merkel made her most important decision of her political career after Hungary already lost control over the refugee flow on its territory during the day. When

the Chancellor, in accordance with her Austrian colleague, Faymann, concluded not to close the borders, one of the motivations of her decision was a humanistic approach regarding the suffering of the people in Hungary. As the German newspaper put the story together: at an evening speech she “also launches a sharp attack on Hungary: It is difficult to watch as those who opened the border for us 24 years ago are now showing severity to those who are obviously fleeing from distress.”.

It is important for us to detect the different interpretations of the events by the partners: the Hungarian government has blamed the Germans for sending an “invitation” to the migrants early morning of the crucial day when issuing a “welcome” statement, whilst the German government has blamed the Hungarians not being thankful for the altruistic help they received in a chaotic situation. Orbán portrayed Angela Merkel as a captive politician of the German grand coalition, arguing that the political left dominates the public discourse in the country.

By then, the situation of the refugees in Hungary was covered as a top issue in the world media again. Migrants broke out of a registration camp at Röszke, stones were thrown at officers, who responded with pepper spray. In early September, police tricked migrants when trains took them to the Bicske refugee camp instead of Austria: refugees went on strike and insisted not to leave the train. A couple of days later, Petra László, camera-woman of a right-wing TV station, kicked some refugees, including kids, in a chaotic moment when police wanted to stop the migrants close to the state border. Her scandal became another symbol of inhuman behaviour. On 15 September 2015, the Hungarian parliament introduced a new package of regulations criminalising its refugee policy and the asylum-seeker procedure. The same day, the construction of the fence was completed. It played a central role in the newly invented legal approach: “the illegal crossing” of the “temporary security border closure” was made a criminal act. “The combined and intended effect of these steps was to deter and limit people who need international protection from accessing it in Hungary” as Márta Pardavi, co-president of the Hungarian Helsinki Committee claimed. Several NGOs called on the Hungarian government to tackle the refugee crisis humanely after the turbulent clashes at Röszke when the border was completely closed in front of the refugees. Here, the

special police forces used tear-gas, beat foreign journalists – and the Hungarian authorities arrested and charged some young and old, healthy and sick migrants in the spirit of the new draconian laws.

In general terms, the objective of the Hungarian government to present the refugee crisis as a security issue has been achieved. “Given that Hungary has had no prior experience with migration and multiculturalism, and that the current wave only passes the country, FIDESZ’s securitization attempt offered higher benefits than costs. Moreover, since a crisis script applied on migration evokes feelings of danger and insecurity, they are by default high on the public agenda. As such, securitizing migration was yet another way for the government to detract both public and media attention from high profile scandals that wrecked political support” as András Szalai and Gabriella Göbl argued in a study. The public mood shifted again as the consequence of the terrorist attacks in November 2015 in Paris: the link between migration and terrorism seemed to be proven in the eyes of the majority of the citizens.

One might think that after the completion of the fence at the Serbian border, and later on, at the Croatian border, that is the Orbán-government pushed the task of solving the problem to the southern neighbours of Hungary without consulting fellow foreign politicians, the refugee issue lost its relevance domestically in a transit county. Moreover, following the EU-Turkey deal in March 2016, the Balkan route for migration was cut, or, at least, the number of asylum-seekers dropped significantly. In fact, the Hungarian ruling party has decided to increase its efforts and to keep the migration issue – and the political tension - on the agenda at a high profile. The focus of the propaganda was even more oriented against the “Brussels bureaucrats” and their plans to force Hungary to accept migrants through a “forced”, mandatory quota system of the European Union. It has been a simplistic and misleading interpretation of the controversial debate at European level about the practical methods how to share the burdens of the crisis and how to show solidarity with member states dealing with the biggest number of asylum-seekers.

Then, the idea of a national referendum emerged and was initiated by the government itself. The question of the referendum facing voters on 2 October 2016, which was invented as a

mobilising tool and can be easily interpreted in many ways because of its vague content, has no legal consequences, is the following: "Do you want the European Union to be able to mandate the obligatory resettlement of non-Hungarian citizens into Hungary even without the approval of the National Assembly?" The posters of the government campaign practically reached every Hungarian village with a frightening message starting with the question: "Did you know?" One of the billboards falsely claims that the terrorist attacks in Paris were implemented by migrants.

#### **4.3.2. The opposition and the media under pressure**

The cacophonous reply given by the democratic opposition parties to the official campaign expresses a general dead-lock and perplexity in these circles. In fact, there have been differences amongst the different political actors regarding their behaviour on the left-liberal part of the political spectrum from the start of the crisis. The biggest formation, the Hungarian Socialist Party showed ambivalence to elaborate any clear position when realising anti-refugee sentiments in its own electorate. At one point, a leading representative of the party, István Hiller defended the creation of the fence at the border, saying there was nobody who had a better idea what to do. The socialists are against the referendum, but in principle they are also against "quotas". Whilst other opposition parties have had a clear-cut pro-European rhetoric, they rarely moved further from a repetitive "Orbán-bashing" and were not able to push through a strong anti-narrative.

Surprisingly, it was once again the Two-Tailed Dog Party, which has collected significant financial support on the internet and has received relatively high attention in the traditional and the social media. The satirical group "has raised €100,000 from 4,000 people, through crowd funding, for their own rival posters and billboards. These mock the government's messages, in both style and content. There are 27 versions, which include: Did you know there's a war in Syria? Did you know a tree might fall on your head? Did you know that in the 16th Century in Somogy county, 42 people were attacked by bears? Did you know one million Hungarians want to emigrate to Europe?" as Nigel Thorpe, the correspondent of the

BBC in Budapest reported. Another voice of resistance appeared in the middle of September 2016 when twenty-two NGOs, including the Hungarian Europe Society, urged citizens to reject the government's fear mongering in a joint declaration. They argued: "The question put to referendum is pointless. No provision on compulsory "resettlement" quotas has ever been adopted, let alone discussed, in the EU. If such a question were put on the agenda in the future, Hungary would have a place at the negotiating table." As an advice to the citizens they claimed: "Some of us will cast an invalid vote, while others will boycott the coerced anti-refugee referendum. Our goal is nevertheless the same: to invalidate this referendum."

To be fair to the opposition parties and the civil groups, the dominance of the government in the media sphere is evident. During the summer of 2015, "by forcing migrants entering at the Serbian border into busy transportation hubs in Budapest, supplying them with little information and thereby prompting them to stay in transit zones without basic amenities, the government could create a now visible image of the migrant as a dirty, unkempt, and potentially dangerous alien. The chaotic images of these zones also presented ammunition for the ongoing media campaign: for instance, media imagery on state television usually used juxtapositions where government officials were wearing medical masks when interacting with migrants", as András Szalai and Gabriella Göbl summarized the situation. The "non-policy" of the government when the authorities did not care about the survival and the accommodation of the refugees during the most hectic days of the crisis was probably a well-calculated political manoeuvre. The media campaign focused on such controversial issues like the garbage the refugees left behind and another *topos* was the suspicious use of mobile phones by people who were supposed to be very poor.

From the very first moment, the wording of the new phenomenon was crucial in the pro-governmental media outlets. Journalists have never called the Syrians, Afghans and others to be refugees in accordance with the official argument of the government: since these newcomers arrived at Hungary through safe countries, they might be seen as refugees in Turkey, but not in Europe where they were looking for a better life. The word migrant sounds quite foreign in Hungarian and has a negative connotation compared to the positive side-effect of the word refugee. As a leaked internal memo elaborated, editors of the state media

were instructed not to show children amongst the migrants on the TV screen – evidently, they could raise sympathy amongst the viewers.

The news programs of the public media have been dominated by reports about the migration crisis, including real and potential terrorist attacks in Western Europe even after the big flow of refugees to Hungary was over. The public TV has regularly invited the same two-three security experts to analyse the news, who invented conspiracy theories why migrants have moved to Europe and blamed European leaders for the crisis. The analysis of *Média Mérték Monitor*, a watchdog NGO summarised the problems of the distorted agenda, the editorial methods and the terminology used in the state-led media saying that “the sole objective of news service in the public media was to bombard viewers with messages in accordance with the government's wishes”. One example of the manipulation was a case when the national public media used a source which neglected the racist motive of a fighting between local people and refugees in Finland; and the original story was reversed with a new title: “Migrants attacked Finns”.

#### **4.4. The response of the civil society**

During the year of 2015 thousands of irregular migrants – most of whom were refugees, asylum seekers or individuals entitled to international protection – arrived to Hungary mainly from Syria, Afghanistan and other Asian and Middle Eastern countries. This was an unprecedented situation in Hungary and although the Hungarian authorities had received clear signs from official sources that a huge number of refugees were waiting in Turkey to start their journey to Europe (mostly targeting Germany, Sweden and other Western European countries), national authorities and the immigration infrastructure remained astoundingly underprepared. From February 2015 onwards detention centres (‘guarded shelters’) reported the arrival of an increasing number of asylum seekers to which the Hungarian government responded with an aggressive anti-immigration billboard campaign, a national consultation on immigration and later on with a campaign against EU-level decision making and the proposed EU quota system. In this situation thousands of Hungarian

volunteers organized themselves in order to offer basic help to people arriving to Hungary. It is important to note here, however, that Hungary was not considered as a destination country by the overwhelming majority of refugees – they had no intention of staying – but rather it was seen as a transit country en route to Western Europe. As such, the immediate needs of refugees could have been easily met had there been political will to do so from the government's side.

The role and efforts of civil society actors were exemplary and quintessential in providing basic social care, logistical assistance and information for refugees. Despite high levels of xenophobia in Hungary approximately 3% of the population took part in civilian efforts to mitigate the effects of chaotic and unpredictable government measures, and the lack of social responsibility more generally. The circle of helpers included established charity or aid organisations, some of them linked to registered churches, formal NGOs with humanitarian missions and/or expertise in refugee protection, as well as newly organized grassroots movements composed of activists, refugees, and foreign and Hungarian volunteers often lacking formal training in social work. These volunteers' groups organized themselves mostly via social media platforms such as Facebook and proved to be quite efficient in looking after refugees on the ground: at central railway stations in Budapest and several locations in the countryside in border areas such as Röszke, Szeged, Zákány or Vámosszabadi (where the number of refugee centres country-wise rose to 11-12 during the climax of the crisis). Recognising the gravity of the situation international organizations also started to play an active role, such as The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) both of which has an office in Budapest, although with different tasks and duties.

In order to find more out about the motivational patterns of civilian activism, we interviewed four members of established civilian organisations (including Menedék Egyesület, the Hungarian Helsinki Committee and the Hungarian Red Cross) and three volunteers who contributed to humanitarian work during Hungary's border crisis in 2015. These semi-structured interviews took place between April and May 2016 in order to map out and identify some of the key events, organizational structures, motivations and views that



characterised the most intense period of activist work between July and September 2015. The following consists of the summary of these interviews.

The politicization and even more so, the *securitization* of migration and asylum seekers and its prominence on the government's agenda gave rise to a new social-political climate where asylum seekers (dubbed as 'migrants'), the theme of 'migration' at large and the notion of 'terrorism' have been increasingly conflated. The government's aggressive (and to date, continuing) tank-like communication strategy against migrants/migration created a legal-political limbo where any assistance or help offered to asylum seekers passing through the country was perceived to be 'illegal' (or at best, too risky) by the national authorities and pro-government NGOs, including various charities or aid organisations. In this vacuum volunteers and semi-formal activists groups in collaboration with established human rights organisations (such as the Hungarian Helsinki Committee, Menedék Egyesület, and Artemisszió) organized themselves quite quickly in the name of solidarity. Civilian activism played an important role in preventing an even greater humanitarian disaster, mostly by taking on a significant range of state duties. Volunteers and human rights organizations were able to provide instant help either on the ground or through background research, constantly adjusting to a rapidly changing legal and political environment.

Information-bias and information-scarcity were present in two major forms during the 'migration crisis.' As mentioned previously, against the backdrop of high levels of xenophobia in the Hungarian public the government's aggressive anti-immigration campaign supported by government-friendly media created biased, one-dimensional representations of 'migrants'. This significantly impacted on public views, deteriorating the potential acceptance and accommodation of migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers at the societal level as well as the possibility of clear, facts-based assessment of the situation. Government propaganda equated the inflow of asylum seekers with a threat to security, public health, national culture and values. The questions of the national consultation process stipulated explicit connections between 'migration' and 'terrorism.' Second, the government's refusal to organize basic social care and transportation for asylum seekers entering the borders of Hungary to temporary facilities and other destinations gave rise to another information gap,

which necessitated the stepping in and immediate assistance of various civil society actors and organizations. Upon entering the country asylum seekers were lacking basic orientation and information with regards to legal provisions and logistics.

Formal human rights organizations (such as the Hungarian Helsinki Committee) sought to rectify this situation by producing and distributing information leaflets to asylum seekers and volunteers providing assistance on the ground. There was an increasing demand from international organisations as well as from national and international news media for impartial and accurate information provision, which necessitated the production of new information material and the restructuring of existing resources. Information provision that could reach the wider segments of society gradually became a pronounced rationale behind these activities also. For instance the Hungarian Helsinki Committee organized popular campaigns previously to challenge the government-lead securitization of migration (such as ‘Bevándorló vagyok/I am an immigrant’ campaign, which encouraged people to send an empty envelope for the national consultation), yet the need to reach out to the wider public at a greater scale to raise awareness of the situation only emerged in this context. Volunteers – many of whom volunteered for the first time – knew little about Hungarian immigration law and the legal background of the ‘migration crisis.’ The Hungarian Helsinki Committee has kept everyday contact with a couple of volunteer representatives from each central railway station on the phone and by organizing occasional information sessions for them, and contributed to providing legal aid and logistical assistance in the form of daily visits to these sites. Menedék Egyesület organized small units composed of one expert in asylum law and another person fluent in Arabic or Farsi that were present at all three central railway stations on a daily basis. As our interviewees note, especially until the closure of the southern border in September 2015, ‘asylum seekers were mostly interested in how they would be able to leave the country.’ Many of them refused hospital treatment in fear of missing the train to a Western country or losing contact with their family members. Formal legal aid organizations were also present at several other locations where asylum seekers were detained to which locations their access became increasingly limited after the completion of the border fence with Serbia.

An important challenge to the work of formal legal aid organizations entailed responding to a rapidly changing legal and political environment. In August and September there have been significant changes in Hungarian asylum law which further contributed to the systematic destruction of the existing asylum system. The locations where people were detained also changed quickly, and as staff members of HHC report, despite already existing agreements with the police and the Office of Immigration and Nationality, they weren't informed of the opening of new or the closing down of already existing 'guarded shelters.' This information asymmetry made particularly difficult the provision of legal aid to asylum seekers, which would have been the state's responsibility, yet remained completely unfulfilled by state authorities. Legal aid was provided in Hungary by HHC only with the support of UNHCR.

In general, both formal and non-formal organizations, such as activists and volunteers were able to mobilize hidden resources at the peak of the crisis, most of them referred to this as a 'moral obligation.' Different modes of operation and different roles played in assisting asylum seekers, however, could mean a potential source of conflict at times. In general all interviews described the collaboration between formal human rights organizations and volunteers as friendly, generous and collegial. The members of formal human rights organizations were 'positively surprised' to see so many volunteers offer their time and energy, often by taking leave from work, or dedicating all their free capacity to the cause of helping refugees for weeks or months. From HHC's point of view the main task in this regard was to offer basic legal advice on, for instance, how to defend oneself as a volunteer, clarify legal terms and practices such as what qualifies as 'people trafficking,' or what consequences it might entail to host refugees in someone's home.

Tensions arose with regards to collaboration with bigger charity organizations, several of which also benefitting from government funding. It was felt they reacted slowly to the situation and that occasionally, precious resources, such as the family tracking unit operated by the Hungarian Red Cross, weren't put to use, which would have been a precious asset. As one of our interviewees note, 'While government pressure is understandable in the case of these organizations, it was unsettling to see that they could have been diverted from their original mandate.' Representatives of the Hungarian Red Cross, acknowledging that 'HRC

responded to the crisis with delay’ and that numerous activities could have indeed been better organized, drew attention to several factors that might have hindered action from their part. ‘The notion of being a “neutral” party doesn’t work in Hungary,’ and as such, despite HRC being a formally ‘independent’ organization with a certain scope of state mandate, received severe criticism from actors across the whole political spectrum. ‘Since we have to continue to work in the country even after refugees leave,’ mobilizing resources could only happen gradually, especially in the light of pro-government public perceptions according to which helping refugees is ‘illegal’ and as such, it was seen as crucial to avoid becoming complicit in committing a crime. The facts that the organization’s asylum portfolio was closed in 2011 (since Hungary’s EU accession reallocated social care for refugees as a state responsibility), that it proved to be surprisingly challenging to recruit volunteers for this particular cause, several organizational glitches often emanating from the need to respond to the rapid increase of refugees at shelters and the opening of new ones, and that regional representatives often lacked appropriate intercultural training contributed to the delayed and initially inefficient, insufficient assistance provided by HRC.

Civilian activism also sought to subvert the government’s attempts to securitize refugees and ‘migration’ as such. Women, children and families in need seen on TV triggered the opposite reaction as the government might have anticipated. Compassion, solidarity, the everyday mobilization of volunteers, donations, information provision and other forms of support on the ground, in this sense, were also seen and experienced by some as acts of political contestation where humanitarian sensitivity and the desire to help others in need merged with a public agenda. Yet the ‘structure’/distribution of visibility remained relatively rigid: railway stations, border crossings and especially the fence at Hungary’s southern borders were mostly in the spotlight and less emphasis was placed on public demonstrations, vigils, volunteers’ experience or the democratic ambitions and organizational logics within grassroots organizations (such as MIGSZOL Budapest).

As our interviewees noted, many people volunteered to help who would otherwise not fall within the camp of those with a ‘liberal, human-rights-advocate, conscious-voter’ attitude but were touched by human suffering. The Hungarian state refused to provide even basic

elements of social care – such as food, blankets and clothing – which made helping an uncomplicated, hands-on act that was capable of mobilizing a significant segment of society. The fact the ‘everyone can do this’ gave rise to a sense of empowerment and volunteers helping on the ground were able to suspend different opinions/worldviews for the duration of the refugee inflow until the border closure in mid-September. ‘Physical’ assistance in this sense had a democratizing quality and effect that was able to (temporarily) unite people regardless of political or ideological stance. For some, volunteering also served as means and expression of situational dissent against particular government policies, in which case any aid or help provided to refugees was also experienced as a form of resistance against the Orbán government’s actions.

## 5. The case of Slovakia

Slovakia has little to no experience with refugees. It has never been one of the final destinations for refugees or migrants. It is a culturally homogeneous country where the representation of foreigners in population remains still very low. In 2015 there were 84,787 foreigners with residence permits in Slovakia which represent only about 1.5% of the total population of Slovakia. Out of all the EU countries, Slovakia has the sixth lowest proportion of foreigners. Traditionally, the most numerous category of foreigners in Slovakia is formed by the citizens of neighboring countries. In last years, the number of asylum applicants has stabilized at several hundred per year.

Surprisingly, and not without some irony, in the context of the heated anti-immigration sentiment, the numbers of asylum-seekers over the said period dropped to the historical low. Only 330 asylum-applications were submitted in 2015 and mere 62 between January - August 2016. 8 applicants received refugee status in 2015 and 155 between January and August 2016, respectively. These are mostly citizens of Iraq, Afghanistan and Ukraine who apply for asylum in the country.

### 5.1. Government-hopes for re-election

Robert Fico as the leader of a nominally center-left party, SMER -SD (SMER -Social Democracy, the only party in power between 2012-2016), made various anti-refugee, Islamophobic statements and threatened to take the EU to the European Court of Justice over its refugee plan with the aim of wining voters in 2016 general elections.

PM Fico initially agreed to accept a very small number of refugees under condition that they were Christians. "I can hardly imagine Muslims integrating in Slovakia, without the members of their family, out of their environment. They would not have the opportunity to practice their religion," he said at a press conference on 9 September 2015 adding that "given that Slovakia is a country where the Catholic Church dominates [...] we cannot tolerate an influx

of 300,000 to 400,000 Muslim immigrants who would start building mosques all over the place.” Robert Fico further added that Slovakia was “incapable of integrating the Roma. But still we pretend that we are able to integrate someone from Eritrea or someone from a completely different religion with different traditions”.

As the elections were coming closer Fico stepped up his rhetoric. After the Paris attacks he even proposed to put every Muslim in Slovakia under surveillance arguing that jihadists could slip into Slovakia masquerading as refugees. “[...] the Slovak government sees a direct link between the current migration flows and the attacks in Paris and recent events in Germany,” he said at a press conference in Bratislava on 7 January 2016 alluding on the violence against women incidents during Cologne New Year’s Eve celebrations.

During the election campaign Fico even changed SMER -SD party slogan from “We are working for you” to “Protecting Slovakia”. Although asylum requests remained close to none, as mentioned before, SMER’s campaign stressed the need to protect “Christian Slovakia” from “Muslim threat”. “I can tell you we will never - under a quota system - bring one single Muslim to Slovakia. And we will never - not even voluntarily - create a self-contained Muslim community, because it would represent a serious security risk.” he said and added that his government has always been opposed to the EU “forcing the member states to accept refugees with diametrically opposed values and ways of life” and “different relationship to women”. Slovakia has only agreed to voluntarily accept 180 Christian Syrian refugees at that stage.

The governmental rhetoric was far away from real actions. The legal changes and actions were, in contrast to Hungary, of rather minor importance. These were not pieces of immigration or asylum law that were altered; there were a couple of amendments to existing provisions related to fight against terrorism instead. The incumbent SMER-SD government with the support of opposition Most-Híd has changed the Constitution to allow 4 days of confinement for individuals suspected of committing acts of terrorism (doubled from two days). The time for the judge to decide on the matter has been also doubled from 72 to 144 hours. The police do not have to provide reason when the suspicion is based on ‘terrorism’.

Moreover, many other amendments have increased the privileges of police, military police and secret services, such as easier tracking of communication of individuals and the punishments became more severe for terrorism. While there have been some concern among pundits and human rights defenders that these new “powers” would be misused against uncomfortable political activists, no such incident occurred as of August 2016.

Fico’s government can be accused of not being consequently against the quota and resettlement system - in July 2015, it vowed to accept 100 Syrian (Christian) refugees and 100 refugees as part of relocation from Italy and Greece. Nevertheless, it has without a word accepted the quota system shortly after the elections and adhered to „Next operational steps in EU-Turkey cooperation in the field of migration” as of 17th March. This agreement does bind Slovakia to adhere to the relocation program, under which none have apparently taken place as of yet.

There is also a program of relocation under UNHCR, ORA and IOM, where Somali citizens are to be relocated to Slovakia (58 persons). There are also some refugees temporarily housed in Slovakia, who are under ‘humanitarian transfer’, i.e. they did not claim asylum here but elsewhere and their claims are administrated here for their further relocation (mainly to Austria). Under the EU-Turkey pact and the quota system, Slovakia will accept 1200 refugees in the future.

## 5.2. Rise of the far-right

Even before the refugee crisis, Slovaks belonged to the least positive European countries towards immigration. In late July 2015, Slovakia agreed to temporarily house 500 refugees from Austria in the Gabčíkovo camp. In August however, the townspeople organized a referendum that garnered a nearly 97 percent vote against allowing refugees to stay in the camp.

It is to no surprise that the far-right party Kotleba-LSNS (Kotleba – People's party Our Slovakia) misused the refugee crisis to bolster their own election campaigning hoping to



finally get into parliament after winning regional elections 2 years ago. Approximately 1,000 people protested against purported “Islamization” of Slovakia and Europe in Bratislava just a day before the group of refugees arrived to Gabčíkovo. The activists, who said they are against the *‘Islamization of Europe’* and migrants from the Middle East and Africa, were chanting slogans like “*Slovakia to Slovaks,*” “*Stop Islamization in Europe; Together Against dictate of Brussels; Europe for Europeans!*” Some of the banners read “*Slovakia is not Africa.*” Most of the participants were not members or sympathizer of this or any other smaller far right party but, more disturbingly, rather non-affiliated, average citizens. Few of the hard-core followers of Mr. Kotleba attacked a Muslim family shortly after the official ending of the march in the center of Bratislava. Although the protest and its smaller followings were not particularly successful it was widely discussed in the media which was clearly the main goal of the organizers.

Kotleba-LSNS gained a shocking 8% in the March elections, a fact even more alarming when considering the high turnout (59%) and that one of the attackers of the Muslim family a year ago is now a member of parliament. It is, however, a point of some discussion among experts and analysts whether the electoral success of the openly neo-Nazi party could be attributed to their xenophobic hate-speech or it is rather the result of objective frustration with mainstream parties across the whole political spectrum among Slovak voters. Regardless the motives of the voters, the party stepped up its anti-refugee and anti-EU rhetoric and activities once in parliament. The day after the results of the British “Brexit“ referendum, Kotleba-LSNS started collecting signatures for a similar referendum to be held in Slovakia next year.

### **5.3. Behind the rise of the far right**

It would not be correct to state that the political rhetoric of the former SMER-SD government is the sole or the most voracious anti-immigrant actor in Slovakia. Although the party is to be blamed for a ruthless capitalization on the anti-immigration sentiments, SMER-SD is, among all, arguably a soft-liner. There is a rare consensus amongst political parties; one example for all is embodied by leading opposition party SaS (“Freedom and Solidarity”) leader Richard

Sulik who claimed he would use “water cannons” against the refugees at the border and never retracted his comments bordering on hate speech.

The public discourse is shaped by the media portraying the refugees as a “threat”, “economic migrants” depicting them as potential terrorists. Notable exceptions are the dailies SME and Dennik N but whose reach is very limited and especially in the case of Dennik N read almost exclusively by liberal elites in Bratislava. The only exception in on-line space is newsportal Aktuality.sk, which made serious journalistic efforts to bring a complete and balanced story of the refugees, while not as elitist as abovementioned Dennik N, it is not one of the Top 5 news portals in Slovakia. Yet another factor is behind the shaping of the hateful public discourse and also behind the rise of the far right in Slovakia – the emergence and empowerment of the so-called “alternative” media.

Throughout 2013 Slovakia witnessed an exponential growth of many “alternative media”, initially published online, increasingly in print versions. These media often cooperate with “traditional” far-right websites and organizations which have been politically present since the 1990’s. They turned seemingly harmless conspiracy theories into a platform for hate-speech, extremism, and anti-Semitism. From the absurd “hollow-Earth theory”, suggesting that an alien race has its headquarters in the middle of the Earth and that the entrance is the very spot where the Slovak, Hungarian, and Austrian borders meet, to the more sinister “world Zionist conspiracy”, or blaming the Roma for Slovakia’s economic situation and demonizing LGBT people. It did not take long for human rights activists and NGOs themselves to be demonized as “American agents”, or worse. By 2014, the so-called alternative media began entering the mainstream public discourse in their own special way.

While still referred to as “controversial”, they were regularly quoted in the mainstream press. This was unheard of no more than a year earlier. The most prominent among these is the so-called Slobodný vysielateľ (“Free Broadcaster”), an internet radio station and a website, notoriously extremist in its content, abusing the name of the short-lived radio station of anti-fascist insurgents during the Slovak National Uprising (SNP) in what was arguably the Slovaks’ finest hour, August 1944. It has promoted and largely assisted in the victory of the

openly neo-Nazi candidate for regional governor, Marián Kotleba, as an alternative to the current “establishment and state”, thus legitimizing neo-Nazi leaders. Neo-Nazis and fascists are often guests on the radio where they are introduced as experts on “Roma issues”, international affairs, human rights, or even science.

Another example is the a monthly magazine called *Zem&Vek* (Earth&Age), edited by a well-known conspirator and anti-Semite, Tibor Rostas, which saw phenomenal success with sales rocketing by 500% within the first three months of its release. A good example of what is treated as an “alternative” here is the issue marking the 50th anniversary of the aforementioned Slovak National Uprising, which included many pages of reprints of Nazi propaganda published by the puppet government during the Uprising. Technically, this is allowed due to a legal loophole concerning the wartime “Slovak state”; an issue for more concern is the ability with which the magazine is able to demonize the anti-fascist resistance, relativize the historical events and the crimes of fascism itself, presenting itself as a relevant historical “Slovak source” about the Uprising. The biggest “success”, and a real cause for concern, is the extent to which these media present the extremist message in a more sophisticated way, making it harder to spot at first glance. By doing so, these publications reach larger parts of the society. Cloaked under the veil of the fight against censorship, these media publish outright lies against refugees, claiming there are “waves” of Islamists behind Slovak borders, there is a “danger of invasion”, or that there is a public disorder in the Western countries that accepted larger numbers of refugees, i.e. Italy, Greece. One could argue that it is in large part to their credit that today, the anti-immigrant mood in Slovakia is as high as in Hungary, although only a few individual refugees have reached the Slovak soil.

Since 2015, virtually any significant alternative to the existing mainstream media promotes fascist ideas. It is not exceptional for progressive voices and environmental protection experts to appear in the same studio or give an interview to the same magazine as neo-Nazi leaders. In addition, more and more establishment figures such as right-wing MPs are starting to accept the “alternative media” as mainstream media outlets and regard their output as journalism, instead of unsupported, incendiary opinion with no regard for professional standards or ethics. The attitude of the publishers is thinly veiled self-righteousness. They

often defend themselves by citing freedom of speech, claiming they are open to everybody and everything, and even accusing all those who refuse to appear in one of their “talk-shows” of censorship. The effect on their recipients is perverting the very idea of freedom of speech by maintaining that our country’s biggest problem is the “censorship“ of fascism and other extremist ideologies in the media and by law.

## 6. The case of the Czech Republic

Much as it has been the case in the rest of Europe, the refugee crisis and the questions of how to cope with it has polarized Czech society into two distinct camps. One based in the capital and, to lesser extent larger cities, in favor of migration, and the rest of the country, the latter being the larger and more predominant, against migration. The discourse towards refugees and the refugee crisis in the Czech Republic, however, is predominantly anti-immigrant, although windows of opportunities to mold this discourse remain strong. This is partially due to a growing economy with an acute demand for labour and the lowest unemployment rate in Europe, partially because the Czech Republic has little to no experience with refugees, being a transit country.

However, several problematic obstacles remain; a schizophrenic political struggle between the moderate Prime Minister Sobotka and the rabidly populist triumvirate of President Zeman, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance Babis, and Minister of the Interior Milan Chovanec, all vehemently anti-immigrant. Media outlets ordering their staff to report critically of refugees, even if it meant wrongfully spinning stories to fit this agenda and compromising journalistic integrity. Lastly, an incident of 89 repatriated Iraqi Christian refugees arriving in the Czech Republic, of which 25 subsequently fled to Germany to apply for German asylum after withdrawing their asylum applications in the Czech Republic, have further compounded the prevailing view in Czech society that refugees are economic migrants first and fleeing war second, which has exacerbated the strong anti-immigration bias.

### 6.1. Fear of the unknown

As mentioned above, the Czech Republic has little to no experience with refugees. The Czech government has agreed to take in 400 refugees in 2015, 700 refugees in 2016 and an additional 400 in 2017, measly numbers compared to those of most of the rest of Europe. The

actual numbers of refugees being granted protection in the Czech Republic is also remarkably lower than most of Europe; out of 1335, a mere 460 – 34 % - were recognized as having right to asylum, of which only 55 were granted refugee status, 15 were granted it for humanitarian reasons. The remaining 390 were granted subsidiary protection, an outrageously high number compared to most of Western Europe. Additionally, the Czech Republic has 0 % positive final decisions on appeal rate.

In short, there are very, very few refugees in the country currently, with no prospects of a noticeable increase in numbers within the foreseeable future despite the global number of refugees steadily increasing with little to no indications of abatement. Of those refugees arriving or already arrived in the country, the most dominant group are Ukrainians, who blend in much more easily than refugees from the MENA countries by virtue of lower language barrier and being Slavic. Thus, it is important to note that the Czech resistance to migration primarily revolves around Muslim immigrants rather than any other type of immigrants, although resistance to migration in general has increased as a corollary to the heightened animosity towards Muslim migration. To illustrate this deteriorating public attitude towards refugees, compare the numbers from July 2015 to March 2016;

In July 2015, 72% of the population were against taking refugees from North Africa, 71% were against taking refugees from Syria, 44% against Ukrainian refugees. However, 24% would take some refugees from North Africa, 26% would take some Syrians, and 53% would take some Ukrainians.

Come March 2016, the numbers look drastically different: 61% are against taking refugees altogether, 32% would take refugees only for a limited time, and a mere 3% would allow them to settle. Only 17% would take any MENA refugees at all, while 79% would do so under no circumstances. Only 37% would take Ukrainians, while 55% would not. While resistance to migration has overall increased, it is particularly the MENA refugees suffering the brunt of the bias. This bias correlates with the heightened frequency of terrorist attacks and incidents such as the Cologne assaults, which are predominantly being reported as issues related to Muslim immigration, despite the fact that often such actions are either only

partially or not at all being conducted by refugees or migrants but instead by domestic residents of the respective countries.

## 6.2. Root Causes of Resistance

There are several root causes amalgamating into a highly toxic bias towards refugees. The increased frequency – real or perceived – in terrorist activity on European soil plays a major part, as does incidents such as the Cologne affair, because it compounds the prevailing discourse within the country that Muslims fundamentally do not belong in Europe. This discourse has gained traction and attained mainstream status primarily through the efforts of the aforementioned triumvirate of anti-immigrant politicians, Zeman, Babis, and Chovanec. The popularity of all three have risen, in Zeman’s case dramatically in large part due to outrageously stating that Muslims are a veritable invading force and cannot be integrated into Europe, since they started promulgating anti-immigrant sentiments, while Prime Minister Sobotka’s has fallen as a result of his more moderate stance.

Additionally, the aforementioned media bias extends beyond just Prima TV station, which was recently incriminated in a scandal after it was revealed that the station’s editors and administration coerced their reporters to report negatively on refugees and migration if they wanted to keep their jobs. Although only Prima TV has been caught red-handed in this, statistics show that the anti-immigrant voices receive far more air-time than the pro-migrant ones, which shapes public opinion immensely as a survey has shown that 75% of the Czech population follows the refugee crisis actively. Therefore, it is also telling that despite the refugee crisis being the central topic discussed in the country, only 2% of the reporting centres around the conditions and lives of the refugees. Thus, it can reasonably be assumed that such shady practices are more widespread than simply one media outlet, especially considering that Andrej Babis, of strong anti-immigrant sentiments, also own two of the largest newspapers in the country (MfD and LN), both of which have a proven track record of publishing factually wrong and heavily negatively biased information about the refugee crisis. For instance, several articles have stated that a “wave of 200.000 refugees will roll

over the Czech Republic, armed with makeshift weapons”, or that a coup against Merkel was imminent due to her “naïve” refugee policy.

In sum, it is obvious that the prevalence of risk analysis as opposed to opportunity analysis, the latter of which only a few civil society actors are responsible for, is omnipresent. Fear-mongering in order to advance domestic political agendas and aspirations of a select elite of politicians prevail over not only journalistic integrity and nuanced reporting, but also of international obligations, human rights and basic human decency and empathy.

Lastly, the V4-dimension cannot be ignored. Although the Czech Republic itself has close to no experience with refugees, making its resistance to it even more puzzling, the situation in Hungary – real or perceived – has to some extent been appropriated by the Czech populist politicians. The V4 countries increasingly cooperate on political issues and speak as a bloc. In this context, Hungary has been extremely successful in dominating the bloc’s agenda and pitting the V4 against the EU on a wide range of issues, such as the quota system. The quota system’s apparent failure has further vindicated the bloc’s perception that it, not the EU, has the proper approach to the refugee crisis, which largely puts human rights second to concerns such as national sovereignty and European isolationism – something that resonates well with the Czech public, who for the first time feels truly relevant in a European context. It is unlikely that the issue will be dropped anytime soon by the bloc; even if the refugee crisis was somehow resolved, it represents the only contemporary avenue for strong V4 influence (the bloc would say “leadership”, which, alas, is misplaced) in EU-context. Furthermore, it has proven an extremely effective domestic political tool for populist politicians to retain otherwise waning support.

### **6.3. The fear of the known unknown**

The Czech Republic fears the known unknown. Known in the sense that terrible headlines increasingly dominate the European and Czech media, painting a picture of dire consequences of Muslim migration, unknown in the sense that it has little actual experience



with refugees of any sorts, but especially Muslim refugees. The populist Czech politicians taps into this fear and exacerbates it, promulgating a view that the very fabric of not only Czech but, indeed, European civilization is threatened, more so than by a resurgent Russia - a bold statement considering the dramatic increase in Russian liaisons with the Czech Republic in recent years.

Ever the country of paradoxes, the Czech Republic is in acute need of labour, having a healthy, growing economy but a shortage of workers, which refugees, with proper integration efforts, could help fill. However, the absence of an effective integration program, as well as a lack of political will to integrate refugees due to public resistance towards migration, makes for an inhospitable refugee and integration environment.

Lastly, at this point the moniker “refugee crisis” or “migration crisis” is arguably misplaced; within the Czech Republic, devoid of refugees, the current crisis has developed into a crisis of civilization and fundamental values. Muslims are perceived as fundamentally incompatible with European and Western civilization. There are currently no strong voices penetrating this discourse and presenting a powerful challenge to it. No politicians truly champion the cause of the refugees to counter the sea of populist politicians who nurture their personal careers and powerbases in a race to the bottom. The media, often under the influence of aforementioned populist politicians, blatantly fail in their role as the fourth pillar of democracy, making it extremely hard for the wider populace to adopt a nuanced view when being bombarded with anti-immigrant sentiments.

## Conclusions

The refugee crisis of 2015 has found the European Union in a dire situation: the aftereffects of the 2008 economic crisis had still not passed, extreme, Eurosceptic political movements have been on the rise on the Western part of the continent, particularly in France and the Netherlands, while a breakdown of the rule of law and the building of an „illiberal democracy” has become the political aim of a number of incumbent governments in the East, especially in Hungary and Poland. The institutions of the EU have come under populist attacks for being ineffective in providing security in all senses for the citizens, the void filled ever more powerfully by the nationalist narrative.

Under these circumstances the mass inflow of asylum seekers from war-torn Syria and other Middle East and some African countries has created a new dividing line within the EU, in which old Member States appeared to be on the „good”, „refugee-loving” side of the line, urging the acceptance and humane treatment of asylum-seekers, whereas the new Member States became the „bad” „refugee-haters”, expelling asylum seekers with a cold and cruel heart. As the results of our studies and workshop present the reality in the latter group, particularly in the so called Visegrad 4 countries (Poland, Slovakia, Czech Republic and Hungary) has been more complex.

In the past 2 years the V4 governments have regularly come up with common positions regarding the handling of the refugee crisis, the main message of which was the refusal to participate in an EU-wide mandatory refugee-relocation system, and demanding the reinforcement of the EU’s external borders in order to reduce the asylum pressure on Europe. On the other hand, the behaviour of the 4 countries behind the scenes have been far from identical: they differed in the way they voted in the EU Council on asylum matters, they were disunited in taking EU decisions to court, there have been significant differences in the modifications of their domestic legal systems regarding refugees, and in the official treatment of refugee supporting civic activism as well.

It is obvious that Hungary was in all aspects the leader of the „pack” in aggressively countering the solidarity and human rights based approach suggested by the European Commission and strongly represented by the German government. There are at least two important factors explaining this. First, Hungary, unlike the other three V4 countries, has found itself among the frontline countries – beside Greece and Italy – of the refugee-route. In its modern history it was the first time that Hungary has met with the mass influx of non-European, non-Christian immigrants. As our research elaborates, during their history the population of Hungary and the other 3 Visegrad countries have become rather homogenous, this fact strongly influencing the generally distrustful attitude of the people in the region regarding migrants from other cultures and religions.

Secondly, this situation offered an excellent opportunity for the government of Viktor Orbán, to advance its ideas of an illiberal nation-state both in the domestic and the international arena, playing on and enhancing the existing fears of „unknown foreigners” in the population in order to distract attention from home-grown economic and social problems. As a consequence the Hungarian government displayed the most hostile behaviour regarding asylum-seekers, whether in domestic and EU-level political rhetoric, legal changes and the effective treatment of asylum-seekers among the V4 countries, the other 3 Member states following suit with different intensity according to their domestic political interests and navigating skills on European waters. While Poland after the 2015 elections has come the closest to the Hungarian standpoints, being the biggest of the four, has her own special interests in not destroying contacts with the EU’s big Member States. Slovakia is a member of the euro-zone, and as such practically belongs to the core of the EU, besides, holding the presidency of the EU in the second half of 2016 is obliged to maintain a certain level of unity among the 27. In terms of democracy the Czech Republic is the most mature of the V4, this fact explaining its rather reserved support of the initiatives of Viktor Orbán.

It is extremely important to highlight the findings of our research on the behaviour of the civil society in the V4 countries during the refugee crisis. Although the general popular attitude towards asylum-seekers, particularly those with Muslim and Arabic background have been wary at the best and outright hostile at the worst, legal and practical support for refugees was

there where and when most needed during the crisis provided by a number of NGO's and many volunteers. These organizations and persons often worked instead and against the will of the authorities, sometimes even threatened by officialdom and the extreme-right tacitly inspired by the government. The NGOs' situation in this regard was again the most difficult in Hungary, where they probably had to fight the strongest anti-refugee propaganda spread by a partisan media extensively occupied by the state, and where the political opposition has been the weakest and most divided.

Still, even in the light of the above, it is unlikely, that the migration issue is going to cause a long lasting rift between East and West in the European integration, provided the EU-Turkey refugee-agreement keeps working and the EU is successful in creating similar agreements with other third countries (e.g. Egypt, Afghanistan, Pakistan), and other international measures – enhancing development in African countries – bear fruit. The V4 countries have a lot in common as to their historical and cultural experiences, but they are far from being uniform. Moreover they are all strongly interested in maintaining the most important achievements of the EU, namely the Schengen zone, the internal market, and the cohesion financial transfers. In this respect, it is again Hungary, which, by the government initiated October 2 referendum on the EU refugee-quotas has put the obstacles to a compromise the highest, but the fact, that Hungary is among the countries in the EU with the biggest popular support for the EU, seems to put limits to the aspirations of an autocratic government, illustrating yet again the Hungarian proverb, which says that „no tree can grow to reach the sky”.

*This paper was closed on 27 September 2016.*

## Selected literature

Aalberg, Toril – Frank Esser – Carsten Reinemann – Jesper Strömbäck – Claes H. de Vreese (eds.): Populist Political Communication in Europe, Routledge, 2017 (2016)

Alexe, Dan: Angela Merkel: no legal limit to refugee numbers, New Europe, September 11, 2015, <https://www.neweurope.eu/article/angela-merkel-no-legal-limit-to-refugee-numbers/>

Balogh, Róbert: Ibrahim ante portas: Közösségi migrációs politika és transznacionális tér. generacio2020.hu, 2010, <http://www.generacio2020.hu/cikkek/56>

Boase, Roger: The Muslim Expulsion from Spain. <http://www.historytoday.com/roger-boase/muslimexpulsion-spain>

Bárdi, Bálint: Hogyan keltett félelmet Orbán a menekültekkel? hvg.hu, 2 November 2015, [http://hvg.hu/itthon/20151102\\_messing\\_bernath\\_interju\\_menekultek](http://hvg.hu/itthon/20151102_messing_bernath_interju_menekultek)

Bershidsky, Leonid: A Nationalist Eastern Europe Could Reshape the EU, BloombergView, 7 September 2016, [www.bloomberg.com/view/articles/2016-09-07/a-nationalist-eastern-europe-could-reshape-the-eu](http://www.bloomberg.com/view/articles/2016-09-07/a-nationalist-eastern-europe-could-reshape-the-eu)

Blume, Georg - Marc Brost, Tina Hildebrandt, Alexej Hock, Sybille Klormann, Angela Köckritz, Matthias Krupa, Mariam Lau, Gero von Randow, Merlind Theile, Michael Thumann, Heinrich Wefing: The Night Germany Lost Control, Zeit Online, 30 August 2016, 2016, [www.zeit.de/gesellschaft/2016-08/refugees-open-border-policy-september-2015-angela-merkel](http://www.zeit.de/gesellschaft/2016-08/refugees-open-border-policy-september-2015-angela-merkel)

Byrne, Andrew: Orban tightens grip on Hungary's media, Financial Times, 16 August 2016, [www.ft.com/cms/s/0/50488256-60af-11e6-ae3f-77baadeb1c93.html](http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/50488256-60af-11e6-ae3f-77baadeb1c93.html)

Csillag, Ádám: Forced March from Hungary to Europe, 9 September 2015, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=r7DqxiH2pGM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r7DqxiH2pGM)

Csuhaj, Ildikó – Kálmán T. Attila: Orbán kiadta az aljas parancsot, egész Magyarországra rászabadítják a rettegést, Népszabadság, 2016. szeptember 15., <http://nol.hu/belfold/nepszavazas-menekult-kvota-orban-viktor-felelemkeltes-bevanderolas-1631879>

Damon, Arwa: "Életem egyik legnehezebb munkáját végeztem Magyarországon", Bihari Ádám interjúja, hvg.hu, 8 September 2016, [http://hvg.hu/itthon/20160908\\_arwa\\_damon\\_cnn\\_roszke\\_magyarorszag\\_hungary\\_menekultek](http://hvg.hu/itthon/20160908_arwa_damon_cnn_roszke_magyarorszag_hungary_menekultek)

European Commission: Member States' Support to Emergency Relocation Mechanism (As of 26 September 2016), [http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/press-material/docs/state\\_of\\_play\\_-\\_relocation\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/press-material/docs/state_of_play_-_relocation_en.pdf)

Foy, Henry – Neil Buckley: Orbán and Kaczyński vow 'cultural counter-revolution' to reform EU, Financial Times, 7 September 2016, [www.ft.com/cms/s/0/e825f7f4-74a3-11e6-bf48-b372cdb1043a.html#axzz4JfOGesB8](http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/e825f7f4-74a3-11e6-bf48-b372cdb1043a.html#axzz4JfOGesB8)

Foster, Peter: Angela Merkel's fight against Europe's far-Right begins at home, The Telegraph, 5 September 2016, [www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/09/05/angela-merkels-fight-against-europes-far-right-begins-at-home/](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/09/05/angela-merkels-fight-against-europes-far-right-begins-at-home/)

Gall, Lydia: Pig-head propaganda: Hungary's war on refugees, EUObserver, 26 August 2016, <https://euobserver.com/opinion/134762>

Halmi, Gábor: Hungary's Anti-European Immigration Laws, 4 November 2015, <http://www.iwm.at/transit/transit-online/hungarys-anti-european-immigration-laws/>

Hartocollis, Anemona - Bilefsky, Dan: Train station in Budapest cuts off service to migrants, New York Times, September 1, 2015. [http://www.nytimes.com/2015/09/02/world/europe/keleti-train-station-budapest-migrant-crisis.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2015/09/02/world/europe/keleti-train-station-budapest-migrant-crisis.html?_r=0)

Hegedűs, István – Zsuzsanna Végh: Illiberal Democracies: What can the European Union do in case a member state regularly and systematically breaches European values and regulations? Hungarian Europe Society, Policy Paper, July 2015, <http://europatarsasag.hu/images/2016Sept/Illiberal%20Democracies%20-%20Policy%20paper%20-%20Final%20version.pdf>

Helsinki Figyelő: „Szakmailag” nem fontos a menekültcsapat sztárjának szereplése a közmédiá szerint, Hungarian Helsinki Committee, blog, 8 August 2016, [http://helsinkifigyelo.blog.hu/2016/08/08/\\_szakmailag\\_nem\\_fontos\\_a\\_menekultcsapat\\_sztarjanak\\_szereplese\\_a\\_kozmedia\\_szerint](http://helsinkifigyelo.blog.hu/2016/08/08/_szakmailag_nem_fontos_a_menekultcsapat_sztarjanak_szereplese_a_kozmedia_szerint)

Helsinki Figyelő: Tömeges kriminalizálás okozta válsághelyzet, Hungarian Helsinki Committee, blog, 15 September 2015, [http://helsinkifigyelo.blog.hu/2015/09/15/tomeges\\_kriminalizalas\\_okozta\\_valsgahelyzet](http://helsinkifigyelo.blog.hu/2015/09/15/tomeges_kriminalizalas_okozta_valsgahelyzet)

Human Rights Watch reports: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2015/09/19/hungary-new-border-regimethreatens-asylum-seekers>, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2015/12/01/hungary-locked-seeking-asylum>

Hungarian Civil Liberties Union: Let's Invalidate the Hungarian Refugee Quota Referendum! 14 September 2016, [www.liberties.eu/en/news/invalidate-the-referendum-hungary-ngo-statement](http://www.liberties.eu/en/news/invalidate-the-referendum-hungary-ngo-statement)

Hungarian Europe Society: Declaration of the Hungarian Europe Society on the decision of the Hungarian government to erect a fence at the Serbian border, 19 June 2015, [www.europesociety.hu/en/declarations/2015/a-magyarorszagi-europa-tarsasag-nyilatkozata-a-magyar-kormany-donteserol-hogy-keritest-emel-a-szerbiai-hatar-menten](http://www.europesociety.hu/en/declarations/2015/a-magyarorszagi-europa-tarsasag-nyilatkozata-a-magyar-kormany-donteserol-hogy-keritest-emel-a-szerbiai-hatar-menten)

Hungarian Helsinki Committee Information Note: BUILDING A LEGAL FENCE – Changes to Hungarian asylum law jeopardise access to protection in Hungary, 7 August 2015

Hungarian legislative acts: <http://www.njt.hu/>

Jámbor András: 22 civil szervezet kéri a polgároktól, szavazzanak érvénytelenül, vagy bojkottálják a népszavazást! Kettős Mércé, 2016. szeptember 14., [http://kettosmerce.blog.hu/2016/09/14/22\\_civil\\_szervezet\\_keri\\_a\\_polgaroktol\\_szavazzanak\\_ervenytelenul\\_vagy\\_bojkottaljak\\_a\\_nepszavazast](http://kettosmerce.blog.hu/2016/09/14/22_civil_szervezet_keri_a_polgaroktol_szavazzanak_ervenytelenul_vagy_bojkottaljak_a_nepszavazast)

Juhász, Attila – Hunyadi, Bulcsú- Zgut, Edit: Focus on Hungary: Refugees, Asylum and Migration, Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung, Political capital Kft., 8 February 2016, [https://www.boell.de/sites/default/files/2015-focus-on-hungary\\_refugees\\_asylum\\_migration.pdf](https://www.boell.de/sites/default/files/2015-focus-on-hungary_refugees_asylum_migration.pdf)

Kallius, Annastiina - Monterescu, Daniel – Rajaram, Prem Kumar: Immobilizing mobility: Border ethnography, illiberal democracy, and the politics of the “refugee crisis” in Hungary, American Ethnologist, Vol. 43, No. 1. 2016

Kocsis, Györgyi: Orbán megy magyarni, HVG, 2016. április 28., [http://hvg.hu/velemenynyuzsog/20160428\\_kocsis\\_gyorgyi\\_orban\\_megy\\_magyarni\\_hetilap\\_velemenynyuzsog](http://hvg.hu/velemenynyuzsog/20160428_kocsis_gyorgyi_orban_megy_magyarni_hetilap_velemenynyuzsog)

Kovács, Krisztina: A nemzetközi migránsok fogadtatása Magyarországon, különös tekintettel Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg megyére. Doktori (PhD) értekezés, Debreceni Egyetem Természettudományi Kar, 2006

László, Beáta: A menedékkérők munkaerő-piaci helyzete Magyarországon (és kitekintés az Európai Unió helyzetére). Budapesti Gazdasági Főiskola Külkereskedelmi Főiskolai Kar, 2008

Mészáros, Tamás: A világot előnti a nacionalizmus, visszatérünk a 19. századba, Report on the presentation of Miyake Kunihiro Japanese professor at the Corvinus University of Budapest, 22 September 2016. [http://index.hu/kulfold/2016/09/23/visszaterunk\\_a\\_19\\_szaszadba/](http://index.hu/kulfold/2016/09/23/visszaterunk_a_19_szaszadba/)

Mérték Media Monitor: Szűrőpróba 6., blog, 9 September 2016, [http://mertek.eu/sites/default/files/reports/szuroproba\\_6.pdf](http://mertek.eu/sites/default/files/reports/szuroproba_6.pdf)



Mérték Média Monitor: Szűrőpróba 3., blog, 8 June 2016, [http://mertek.eu/sites/default/files/reports/szuroproba\\_3\\_0.pdf](http://mertek.eu/sites/default/files/reports/szuroproba_3_0.pdf)

Migszol (Migrant Solidarity Group of Hungary): Fidesz's "National Consultation" is no consultation at all. It is a shameless piece of propaganda – A Migszol commentary, blog, 20 May 2015, [www.migszol.com/blog/fideszs-national-consultation-is-no-consultation-at-all-it-is-a-shameless-piece-of-propaganda-a-migszol-commentary](http://www.migszol.com/blog/fideszs-national-consultation-is-no-consultation-at-all-it-is-a-shameless-piece-of-propaganda-a-migszol-commentary)

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic, "Ministerial meeting of V4 and the Western Balkans on November 12-13, 2015," November 13, 2015. [http://www.mzv.cz/jnp/en/foreign\\_relations/visegrad\\_group/events/ministerial\\_meeting\\_of\\_v4\\_and\\_the.html](http://www.mzv.cz/jnp/en/foreign_relations/visegrad_group/events/ministerial_meeting_of_v4_and_the.html)

Müller, Jan-Werner: Trump, Erdoğan, Farage: The attractions of populism for politicians, the dangers for democracy, The Guardian, 2 September 2016, [www.theguardian.com/books/2016/sep/02/trump-erdogan-farage-the-attractions-of-populism-for-politicians-the-dangers-for-democracy](http://www.theguardian.com/books/2016/sep/02/trump-erdogan-farage-the-attractions-of-populism-for-politicians-the-dangers-for-democracy)

Nagy, Boldizsár: Parallel realities: refugees seeking asylum in Europe and Hungary's reaction, EU Immigration and Asylum Law and Policy, 4 November 2015, <http://eumigrationlawblog.eu/parallel-realities-refugees-seeking-asylum-in-europe-and-hungarys-reaction/>

Najšlová, Lucia - Balcer, Adam -Murray, Rebecca - Végh, Zsuzsanna: Should We Upgrade the V4-Turkey Dialogue?, EU Frontiers Policy Paper, No.13 (2016)

Nielsen, Nikolaj - Zalán, Eszter: EU forces 'voluntary' relocation on eastern states, EUobserver, September 22, 2015. <https://euobserver.com/migration/130374>

NGOs call on the Hungarian government to tackle the refugee crisis humanely, The Budapest Beacon, 9 September 2015, <http://budapestbeacon.com/featured-articles/ngos-call-on-the-hungarian-government-to-tackle-the-refugee-crisis-humanely/27021>

Open Society Foundation summary: Understanding Migration and Asylum in the European Union,

<https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/explainers/understanding-migration-and-asylum-europeanunion>

Orbán, Viktor: Szeretem ezt az országot, és nem szeretném, ha külső parancsra valaki megváltoztatná, Interview by László Gábor and Bence György, Origo, 22 September 2016, [www.origo.hu/itthon/20160921-orban-viktor-interju.html](http://www.origo.hu/itthon/20160921-orban-viktor-interju.html)

Orbán, Viktor: «Ein Wort von Merkel – und die Flut ist gestoppt», interview by Roger Köppel and Wolfgang Koydl, die Weltwoche, 12 November 2015, [www.weltwoche.ch/weiche/hinweisgesperrt.html?hidID=555458](http://www.weltwoche.ch/weiche/hinweisgesperrt.html?hidID=555458)

Pardavi, Márta: How Hungary Systematically Violates European Norms On Refugee Protection, Social Europe, 31 August 2016, [www.socialeurope.eu/2016/08/hungary-systematically-violates-european-norms-refugee-protection/](http://www.socialeurope.eu/2016/08/hungary-systematically-violates-european-norms-refugee-protection/)

Patočka, Jakub: Miloš Zeman makes Nigel Farage look like a nice guy. It's even worse than that, The Guardian, 15 September 2016, [www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/sep/15/milos-zeman-czech-republic-president-populists-post-communist](http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/sep/15/milos-zeman-czech-republic-president-populists-post-communist)

Power, Samantha: Remarks at the UN High-Level Forum on Antisemitism, New York City, 7 September 2016, <https://usun.state.gov/remarks/7416>

Renzi, Matteo: The Mediterranean migrant emergency is not Italy's. It is Europe's, The Guardian, June 23, 2015. [https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/jun/23/mediterranean-migrant-crisis-not-italy-but-europe?CMP=fb\\_gu](https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/jun/23/mediterranean-migrant-crisis-not-italy-but-europe?CMP=fb_gu)

Rettman, Andrew: Orban demonises immigrants at Paris march, EUObserver, 12 January 2015, <https://euobserver.com/justice/127172>

Rettman, Andrew: Poland says No to migrants after Brussels attack, EUobserver, March 23, 2016. <https://euobserver.com/justice/132793>

S. Balogh, Éva: In the service of the Orbán regime: György Schöpflin and the pig heads, Hungarian Spectrum, 23 August 2016, <http://hungarianspectrum.org/2016/08/23/in-the-service-of-the-orban-regime-gyorgy-schopflin-and-the-pig-heads/>

S. Balogh, Éva: Hungarian Social Scientists Protest Viktor Orbán's "National Consultation", Hungarian Spectrum, 30 April 2015, <http://hungarianspectrum.org/2015/04/30/hungarian-social-scientists-protest-viktor-orbans-national-consultation/>

Schiltz, Christoph B.: Asselborn fordert Ausschluss Ungarns aus der EU: Die Welt, 13 September 2016, [www.welt.de/politik/ausland/article158094135/Asselborn-fordert-Ausschluss-Ungarns-aus-der-EU.html](http://www.welt.de/politik/ausland/article158094135/Asselborn-fordert-Ausschluss-Ungarns-aus-der-EU.html)

-Schmidt Mária: Útban az önmegsemmisítés felé, 2015. november 12., Látószög, [http://latoszogblog.hu/blog/utban\\_az\\_onmegsemmisites\\_fele](http://latoszogblog.hu/blog/utban_az_onmegsemmisites_fele)

Schmidt, Mária: Európa izraelizációja, Látószög, 2016. augusztus 26., [http://latoszogblog.hu/blog/europa\\_izraelizacioja](http://latoszogblog.hu/blog/europa_izraelizacioja)

Statistics of asylum decisions in the EU. Eurostat Press Release, 75/2016, 20 April 2016.

<http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/2995521/7233417/3-20042016-AP-EN.pdf/34c4f5af-eb93-4ecd-984c-577a5271c8c5>

Statistics of the Hungarian immigration office. [http://www.bmbah.hu/index.php?option=com\\_k2&view=item&layout=item&id=492&Itemid=1259&lang=en](http://www.bmbah.hu/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&layout=item&id=492&Itemid=1259&lang=en)

Statistics of the UNHCR <http://www.unhcr.org/figures-at-a-glance.html>

Sterling, Toby: Dutch government floats 'mini-Schengen' idea to EU partners, Reuters, November 19, 2015. <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-europe-migrants-netherlands-idUSKCN0T81J720151119>

Schuler, Katharina: Die Orbánisierung der CSU, Zeit Online, 9 September 2016, [www.zeit.de/politik/deutschland/2016-09/csu-vorstand-zuwanderung-integration-migration](http://www.zeit.de/politik/deutschland/2016-09/csu-vorstand-zuwanderung-integration-migration)

Shattuck, John: Lift Central Europe's historical amnesia. Boston Globe, 9. Sept. 2015 <https://www.bostonglobe.com/opinion/2015/09/09/amid-refugee-crisis-lift-central-europe-historical-amnesia/x0hfw7jSAqUCxPP4Zo3l2N/story.html>

Szalai, András - Gabriella Göbl: Securitizing Migration in Contemporary Hungary, Working paper, Center for European Neighborhood Studies, Central European University, 30 November 2015, <https://cens.ceu.edu/sites/cens.ceu.edu/files/attachment/event/573/szalai-goblmigrationpaper.final.pdf>

Taparata, Eva and Kuang Keng Kuek Ser: During WWII, European refugees fled to Syria. Here's what the camps were like, PRI, April 26 2016. <http://www.pri.org/stories/2016-04-26/what-it-sinside-refugee-camp-europeans-who-fled-syria-egypt-and-palestine-during>

Teczár, Szilárd: Erőfölény gátlások nélkül, Magyar Narancs, 1 September 2016

The Budapest Beacon: Anti-immigrant propaganda dominates state media coverage of Olympic Games, 11 August 2016, <http://budapestbeacon.com/featured-articles/state-media-coverage-of-olympic-games-replete-with-anti-immigrant-propaganda/37431>

Thorpe, Nick: Hungary poster campaign pokes fun at migrant referendum, BBC News, 10 September 2016, [www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-37310819](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-37310819)

Traynor, Ian: EU chief warns Hungary over return of death penalty comments, The Guardian, 30 April 2015, [www.theguardian.com/world/2015/apr/30/eu-jean-claude-juncker-viktor-orban-hungary-death-penalty-return](http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/apr/30/eu-jean-claude-juncker-viktor-orban-hungary-death-penalty-return)

Turay Balázs: Exodus, Volunteers on the Rise, 2015, <http://volunteersrise.wixsite.com/exodus-budapest>

Zalán, Eszter: V4 turning heads in Europe's refugee crisis, V4 Revue, May 5, 2015. <http://visegradrevue.eu/v4-turning-heads-in-europes-refugee-crisis/>

Zalán, Eszter: Hungary's satire party takes on migrant referendum, EUObserver, 2 September 2016, <https://euobserver.com/news/134869>

Visegrad Group: Joint Statement on Migration, February 15, 2016. <http://www.visegradgroup.eu/calendar/2016/joint-statement-on>

Visegrad Group: Joint Statement of the Heads of Government of the Visegrad Group Countries, June 19, 2015. <http://www.visegradgroup.eu/calendar/2015/joint-statement-of-the>

Visegrad Group: Joint Statement of the Heads of Government of the Visegrad Group Countries, September 4, 2015. <http://www.visegradgroup.eu/calendar/2015/joint-statement-of-the-150904>

Visegrad Group: Joint Statement of the Visegrad Group Countries, December 17, 2016. <http://www.visegradgroup.eu/calendar/2015/joint-statement-of-the-151221-1>

Visegrad Group: Press Statement on the Occasion of the Summit of V4 Prime Ministers and the President of the French Republic, June 19, 2015. <http://www.visegradgroup.eu/calendar/2015/press-statement-on-the>

Visegrad Group: V4 Ministers in Joint Article: We Offer You Our Helping Hand on the EU Path, November 11, 2015. <http://www.visegradgroup.eu/calendar/2015/v4-ministers-in-joint>

Visegrad Group: Joint Declaration of Ministers of the Interior, January 19, 2016. <http://www.visegradgroup.eu/calendar/2016/joint-declaration-of>

Womack, Helen: Home at last for young refugees in Hungarian orphanage. 22 February 2016 <http://www.unhcr.org/news/latest/2016/2/56cafd8e5/home-young-refugees-hungarian-orphanage.html>

“What is the V4 for?,” V4Revue, September 3, 2015. <http://visegradrevue.eu/what-is-the-v4-for/>

5 facts about the Muslim population in Europe. Pew Research Center, July 19, 2016  
<http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/07/19/5-facts-about-the-muslim-population-in-europe/>

“Greece told it could be kicked out of Schengen,” *EurActiv*, December 3, 2015.  
<https://www.euractiv.com/section/justice-home-affairs/news/greece-told-it-could-be-kicked-out-of-schengen/>

“Merkel at her limit,” *The Economist*, October 10, 2015.  
<http://www.economist.com/news/europe/21672296-after-historic-embrace-refugees-german-public-opinion-turning-merkel-her-limit>

“Visegrad Four mobilise to keep Schengen intact,” *EurActiv*, December 4, 2015.  
<https://www.euractiv.com/section/central-europe/news/visegrad-four-mobilise-to-keep-schengen-intact/>

“V4 Group to send Policemen to Macedonian border with Greece,” *MINA*, February 4, 2016.  
<http://macedoniaonline.eu/content/view/28812/2/>