

FACING THE CHALLENGES IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

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Re-thinking EU Education and Research
for Smart and Inclusive Growth (EuInteg)

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Marta Pachocka*

THE EUROPEAN UNION AND INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION IN THE EARLY 21ST CENTURY: FACING THE MIGRANT AND REFUGEE CRISIS IN EUROPE¹

Abstract

International migration is a real challenge facing the European Union and its Member States today and in the near future. The EU has been one of the main destinations of increasing immigration on the regional and global scales since the beginning of the 21st century, while at the same time experiencing important migratory movements within its borders. Therefore, it has been looking for effective solutions to approach the multidimensional consequences of the growing influx of migrants into its territory. However, the events in international relations – especially in the Mediterranean Region after 2010 – raise more questions than provide answers. The aim of this paper is to present the recent immigration trends to the EU Member States, highlighting, in particular the importance of their consequences, as well as discuss the challenges they introduce together with possible solutions at the EU level.

Keywords: the European Union, the EU, the Mediterranean Sea, international migration, asylum, immigrants, asylum seekers, refugees, migrant crisis, immigration crisis, refugee crisis, European Agenda on Migration, common migration and asylum policy

Introduction

International migration is a real challenge facing the European Union and its Member States today and in the near future. The EU has been one of the main destinations of

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increasing immigration on the regional and global scales since the beginning of the 21st century, while at the same time experiencing important migratory movements within its borders. Therefore, it has been looking for effective solutions to approach the multidimensional consequences of the growing influx of migrants into its territory. However, the events in international relations – especially in the Mediterranean Region after 2010 – raise more questions than provide answers.

The EU, which in recent years has often been subject to various tests, is now facing a crisis of a different nature than the global financial and economic crisis of 2008 or the political and institutional crisis of 2015 concerning a potential exit of the UK from the EU (“Brexit”) or Greek exit from the euro zone (“Grexit”). The ongoing crisis – called “migrant”, “(im)migration”, “refugee” or “asylum” crisis – is a multidimensional one. On the one hand, the first two terms should be used to underline the demographic aspect of the crisis, highlighting an increasing number of people arriving in the EU territory in a short period of time. The majority of migrating people travel to Europe across the Mediterranean Sea from Africa and Asia, often crossing the external EU borders illegally. Another reason to consider the current crisis as a migrant one refers to the consequences of this massive flows of people not only of a demographic nature, but also of socio-economic, political or cultural one, especially if the migratory movement is not transitory, but will conclude with a long-term or permanent residence. On the other hand, the current crisis is treated as refugee or asylum one, since a large part of people coming to Europe declare seeking international protection, usually understood as encompassing i.a. asylum, refugee status or subsidiary protection status². Different concepts are applied for the purposes of defining this particular crisis depending on its assumed geographical scope (e.g. Europe’s crisis, EU’s crisis, Mediterranean crisis, etc.), emphasized aspect (e.g. demographic or humanitarian one, etc.) or the perspective adopted (e.g. EU or UNHCR context). From the point of view of the European Union it is both an (im)migration and refugee crisis and this assumption is made in this article.

The observed crisis situation provokes many doubts in terms of socio-economic and logistic capacities of the EU Members States to accept migrants and refugees and to create them the adequate conditions to integrate with host societies. These concerns are reinforced by an unequal dispersal of migrating people among EU states and the resulting consequences. Therefore, the migration and refugee crisis puts the EU to a great test of solidarity, mutual trust and shared responsibility of the Member States as well as the one of the European value system and EU moral foundations. It is also a

² More on the subject of terms and definitions concerning international protection, asylum and refugee status, cf. Table 1.

political and institutional test – a validation of common migration and asylum policy together with its institutions, mechanisms and instruments.

The aim of this paper is to present the recent immigration trends to the EU Member States, highlighting, in particular the importance of their consequences, as well as to discuss the challenges they introduce together with possible solutions at the EU level. Therefore, this paper consists of three main parts, starting with a brief overview of terminological and definitional dilemmas in the field of international migration and asylum to show the multiplicity of terms and definitions in use and the complexity of relations between them. In the second part, the recent developments in the area of international migratory movements of different nature to the EU Member States were described, including key facts and figures on the migrant and refugee crisis in Europe. The EU response to the current crisis situation was discussed in the third part of the paper, focusing on the European Agenda on Migration proposed in May 2015 and on its two important immediate actions – the relocation and resettlement schemes. On the basis of these considerations final conclusions are formulated.

In this paper, adopting the EU approach, I usually use the expression of “(international) migration and asylum” having in mind a broader context encompassing international migration, international protection, asylum and related issues.

1. Terminological and Definitional Dilemmas

Analysis of the current crisis situation in Europe is complicated, in part by terminological and definitional dilemmas concerning international migration, international protection, asylum and related issues. Both, countries and international organizations (e.g. United Nations, International Organization for Migration, European Union) often use different terms and definitions which makes it difficult to conduct research in the aforementioned field.

On the one hand, terminological problems may refer to the sets of words such as: migrant – immigrant – foreigner, applicant for international protection – asylum seeker – refugee, (im)migrant – refugee, etc. On the other hand, a real challenge is to define “(international) migrant” and “immigrant” as there is no one commonly used way to understand them.

As an example, a definition of “(im)migrant” can be based on various criteria or their combinations (cf. Anderson, Blinder 2014), such as: citizenship, country of birth, country of previous usual residence, length of stay, the formal basis for staying in a host country, main cause(s) of migration, and its voluntary or forced nature.

The application of different criteria and definitions results in different sets of data on immigration in terms of flows and stocks. Groups of people brought together in this way, usually have some common part, but they are not identical i.e. not all foreigners are immigrants, because they do not have to hold citizenship of their country of birth; similarly, among immigrants there may be citizens of a given country, but born abroad; and finally, some people declaring at least a yearlong stay in a host country ultimately perceive it as a country of transit. Another related problem is the collection of the data as even within one country individual institutions themselves can obtain information about (im)migrants on the basis of different criteria: national statistical offices usually collect the data through the census of the resident population, offices for foreigners – through the lists of asylum or residence permit applications while research institutes, NGOs and opinion poll centers usually gather information from their surveys.

Definitions in the field of international migration used in the official documents and statistics of the EU do not always comply with those used by the Member States, which impedes collection of comparable data and their analysis. However, the EU has taken action to standardize the data gathered, in reference to the United Nations' *Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration* (1998a) and *Recommendations for the Censuses of Population and Housing in the ECE region* (1998b). Since 2008 the annual international migration data collection for the EU Member States is done under the requirements of *Regulation (EC) No. 862/2007 of the European Parliament and of the Council on Community statistics on migration and international protection* (European Union 2007). Eurostat, in cooperation with the United Nations Statistical Division, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, and the Europe and the International Labor Office, requests data from national statistical institutes in the EU within the framework of the Joint Annual International Migration Data Collection. These data are sourced from administrative records or national surveys, and in the case of some datasets, statistical estimation methods are applied by Eurostat (Eurostat, Metadata). To conclude, according to the above-mentioned *Regulation (EC) No. 862/2007* “immigrant” is understood as a person undertaking “the action by which a person establishes his or her usual residence in the territory of a Member State for a period that is, or is expected to be, of at least 12 months, having previously been usually resident in another Member State or a third country” (European Union 2007: Article 2).

In the Union, the definitions contained in the EU *acquis* are the priority. In *Asylum and Migration Glossary* prepared by the European Migration Network, the hierarchy of sources of definitions to be used in the Union was precisely set out (c.f. European Migration Network 2014: 7). Table 1 provides a brief overview of selected key terms relating to migration and asylum contained in the *Glossary* (2014). Each term is

shortly defined, often in both – global and EU contexts and sources of definitions are indicated. In addition, synonyms are provided together with broader, narrower and related terms. All terms are grouped into two blocks, the first of which concerns international migration and related terms, while the other one focuses on international protection, asylum and related terms. Both – in the global and EU contexts – “migration” is understood as a long-term movement lasting at least one year. However, in the global context the term “migrant” can be applied to nationals or citizens of one state residing in another country, a foreign one, while in the EU context the key criterion to recognize someone as a “migrant” is his or her previous and future place of usual residence, and not his or her nationality or citizenship. Many terms are used to indicate a migrant in an irregular situation, e.g. “irregular” migrant. Other synonyms include i.a. “clandestine”, “illegal”, “unauthorized” or “undocumented” migrant.

An analysis of the terms listed in the second block of the Table 1 shows that “international protection” is a broader term than “refugee status” and “subsidiary protection”, while “asylum” is a related term. In most EU Member States “application for international protection” and “application for asylum” are understood as synonyms, although the meaning of the latter is narrower. Also, “international protection” and “asylum” are often used interchangeably, even though they are not the same. In turn, the term “refugee” is firmly rooted in the international law, starting with *The Geneva Convention* of 1951 and *The New York Protocol* of 1967. Depending on the circumstances of a specific situation and law to be applied (if justified), different categories of refugees are identified and concepts are in use, e.g. Convention (recognized) refugee, *prima facie* refugee, *de facto* refugee, mandate refugee, [civil] war refugee or resettled refugee. In addition, refugees and displaced persons are considered to be forced migrants.

Due to the terminological and definitional maze in the area of migration and asylum, in any research or study conducted in this field, one should always choose its context (global, EU or national), indicate the preferred approach(es) of one or more entities to be adopted (e.g. IOM, UNHCR or EU), and set the main targets. This determines terms and their definitions to be used and legal frameworks to be applied (e.g. international refugee law, EU *acquis* or national legislation). Also, it influences the way of conducting an analysis and formulating conclusions. Of course, in the media and political discourse this precision is much more difficult to achieve.

Table 1. Overview of Selected Key Terms on International Migration, Asylum and Related Issues Used at the Global and European Union's Levels

Key term	Definition [Source]	Terms (S) Synonymous (B) Broader (N) Narrower (R) Related
Migration	<p style="text-align: center;">International migration and related terms</p> <p>1. In the global context, movement of a person either across an international border (international migration), or within a state (internal migration) for more than one year irrespective of the causes, voluntary or involuntary, and the means, regular or irregular, used to migrate. [Derived by EMN from UN Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration and IOM Glossary on Migration, 2nd ed., 2011]</p> <p>2. In the EU context, the action by which a person either: (1) establishes their usual residence in the territory of a Member State for a period that is, or is expected to be, of at least 12 months, having previously been usually resident in another Member State or a third country; or (2) having previously been usually resident in the territory of a Member State, ceases to have their usual residence in that Member State for a period that is, or is expected to be, of at least 12 months. [Derived by EMN from the UN Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration and OECD Glossary of Statistical Terms]</p>	<p>(S) n/a (B) n/a (N) economic migration, emigration, forced migration, immigration, irregular migration, legal migration, long-term migration, short-term migration (R) displacement, migrant</p>
Migrant	<p>1. In the global context, a person who is outside the territory of the State of which they are nationals or citizens and who has resided in a foreign country for more than one year irrespective of the causes, voluntary or involuntary, and the means, regular or irregular, used to migrate. [Derived by EMN from the UN Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration and UNESCO]</p> <p>2. In the EU context, a person who either: (1), establishes their usual residence in the territory of an EU Member State for a period that is, or is expected to be, of at least 12 months, having previously been usually resident in another Member State or a third country; or (2) having previously been usually resident in the territory of an EU Member State, ceases to have their usual residence in that Member State for a period that is, or is expected to be, of at least 12 months. [Derived by EMN from Eurostat's Concepts and Definitions Database and the UN Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration]</p>	<p>(S) n/a (B) n/a (N) economic migrant, emigrant, forced migrant, immigrant, short-term migrant, long-term migrant (R) migration</p>
Irregular migrant	<p>1. In the global context, a person who, owing to irregular entry, breach of a condition of entry or the expiry of their legal basis for entering and residing, lacks legal status in a transit or host country. [Derived by EMN from IOM Glossary on Migration, 2 ed. 2011]</p> <p>2. In the EU context, a third-country national present on the territory of a Schengen State who does not fulfil, or no longer fulfils, the conditions of entry as set out in the Schengen Borders Code, or other conditions for entry, stay or residence in that Member State. [Derived by EMN from the definition of "illegal stay" in Art. 3 of Directive 2008/115/EC (Return Directive)]</p>	<p>(S) clandestine migrant, illegal migrant, insufficiently documented migrant, migrant in an irregular situation, migrant with irregular status, unauthorized migrant, undocumented migrant (B) migrant (N) third-country national found to be illegally present (R) apprehension, irregular migration, overstay(er)</p>

<p>Immigrant</p>	<p>1. In the global context, a non-resident (both national or alien) arriving in a State with the intention to remain for a period exceeding a year. <i>[UN Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration]</i> 2. In the EU context, a person who establishes their usual residence in the territory of a Member State for a period that is, or is expected to be, of at least 12 months, having previously been usually resident in another Member State or a third country. <i>[Art. 2(b) and (f) of Regulation (EC) No 862/2007 (Migration Statistics)]</i></p>	<p>(S) n/a (B) migrant (N) n/a (R) emigrant, immigration, short-term migrant (R) displacement, migrant</p>
<p>International protection, asylum and related terms</p>		
<p>International protection</p>	<p>1. In the global context, the actions by the international community on the basis of international law, aimed at protecting the fundamental rights of a specific category of persons outside their countries of origin, who lack the national protection of their own countries. <i>[UNHCR Master Glossary of Terms]</i> 2. In the EU context, protection that encompasses refugee status and subsidiary protection status. <i>[Derived by EMN from Art. 2(a) of Directive 2011/95/EC (Recast Qualification Directive)]</i></p>	<p>(S) n/a (B) protection (N) refugee status, subsidiary protection (R) asylum, Geneva Convention of 1951 and Protocol of 1967, humanitarian protection, temporary protection, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees</p>
<p>Applicant for international protection</p>	<p>A third-country national or a stateless person who has made an application for international protection in respect of which a final decision has not yet been taken. <i>[Art. 2(j) of Directive 2011/95/EU (Recast Qualification Directive)]</i></p>	<p>(S) n/a (B) n/a (N) asylum seeker, applicant in need of special procedural guarantees, applicant with special reception needs, examination of an application for international protection, rejected applicant for international protection (R) beneficiary of international protection, person eligible for subsidiary protection</p>
<p>Beneficiary of international protection</p>	<p>A person who has been granted refugee status or subsidiary protection status. <i>[Art. 2(b) of Directive 2011/95/EU (Recast Qualification Directive)]</i></p>	<p>(S) n/a (B) n/a (N) Convention refugee, person eligible for subsidiary protection (R) applicant for international protection, person eligible for subsidiary protection</p>
<p>Asylum</p>	<p>A form of protection given by a State on its territory, based on the principle of non-refoulement and internationally or nationally recognized refugee rights and which is granted to a person who is unable to seek protection in their country of citizenship and / or residence, in particular for fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion. <i>[Developed by EMN]</i></p>	<p>(S) n/a (B) n/a (N) right of asylum (R) international protection</p>

Key term	Definition [Source]	Terms (S) Synonymous (B) Broader (N) Narrower (R) Related
Asylum seeker	<p>1. In the global context, a person who seeks safety from persecution or serious harm in a country other than their own and awaits a decision on the application for refugee status under relevant international and national instruments. [Derived by EMN from IOM Glossary on Migration, 2 ed. 2011]</p> <p>2. In the EU context, a person who has made an application for protection under the Geneva Convention in respect of which a final decision has not yet been taken. [Derived by EMN from Art. 2(c) of Council Directive 2003/9/EC (Asylum Procedures Directive)]</p>	<p>(S) asylum applicant (B) applicant for international protection (N) n/a (R) refugee</p>
Application for asylum	<p>An application made by a foreigner or a stateless person which can be understood as a request for protection under the Geneva Convention of 1951 or national refugee law. [Derived by EMN from the definition in Art. 2 (b) of Council Directive 2003/9/EC (Reception Conditions Directive)]</p>	<p>(S) asylum application (B) application for international protection (N) unfounded application for international protection (R) n/a</p>
Refugee	<p>1. In the global context, a person who, owing to irregular entry, breach of a condition of entry or the expiry of their legal basis for entering and residing, lacks legal status in a transit or host country. [Derived by EMN from IOM Glossary on Migration, 2 ed. 2011]</p> <p>2. In the EU context, a third-country national present on the territory of a Schengen State who does not fulfil, or no longer fulfils, the conditions of entry as set out in the Schengen Borders Code, or other conditions for entry, stay or residence in that Member State. [Derived by EMN from the definition of "illegal stay" in Art. 3 of Directive 2008/115/EC (Return Directive)]</p>	<p>(S) n/a (B) forced migrant (N) Convention refugee, prima facie refugee, resettled refugee (R) applicant for international protection, asylum seeker, displaced person (N) third-country national found to be illegally present (R) apprehension, irregular migration, overstay(er)</p>
Refugee status	<p>The recognition by an EU Member State of a third-country national or stateless person as a refugee. [Art. 2(e) of Directive 2011/95/EU (Recast Qualification Directive)]</p>	<p>(S) n/a (B) international protection (N) n/a (R) beneficiary of international protection, Convention refugee withdrawal of refugee status</p>

Source: Own work based on: European Migration Network (2014): 25, 28, 32–33, 37, 157, 168, 172, 187, 230, 232.

2. Immigration to the EU Member States – an Overview of Recent Trends

Within the EU the migration movements can be analyzed from at least two perspectives: migration between the EU (its Member States) and third countries or migration within the EU (between Member States), thus one can research either extra-EU migration or mobility within the EU (intra-EU migration). According to some authors, extra-EU migration is understood as movements of non-EU citizens (third-country nationals, TCNs³) from outside the EU to its territory, while intra-EU migration thus refers to the EU citizens who benefit from their right of free movement within the Union (Boswell, Geddes 2011: 2–3).

Below, there is an overview of the situation in the area of international migration in the European Union, focusing on immigration to the EU and its Member States. For the purpose of this analysis, some indicators were selected to show recent migration trends, such as the total number of immigrants and emigrants in the EU states, as well as immigration by citizenship, country of birth and country of previous usual residence (cf. Eurostat, Statistics Explained).

The core part of the analysis is based on the Eurostat data on long-term international migration, where a “long-term immigrant” – as mentioned before – is a person establishing his or her usual residence in the territory of one of the EU Member States for a period – actual or expected – of at least one year, having previously been usually resident in another Member State or a third country. These data do not include figures on refugee and asylum seekers as well as do not reveal a size of irregular immigration. We focus on the most recent and complete data sets available at the time of writing, mostly for 2013, to show immigration to the EU from the demographic perspective.

About 3.4 million people immigrated to 28 EU Member States in 2013. This number included nationals of the reporting state⁴ and of other EU Member States, non-EU nationals, stateless persons and persons with unknown citizenship. The most immigrants in absolute terms were recorded in Germany (692.7 thousand people) and the United Kingdom (526 thousand), whose combined share in total immigration

³ In the EU legislation there is a term “third-country national” (TCN) which denotes a person “who is not a citizen of the European Union within the meaning of Article 17(1) of the Treaty, including stateless persons” (European Union 2007: Art. 2), yet, Eurostat in its detailed international migration statistics reports separate data for TCNs (as “citizenship of non-EU-28-countries”) and stateless persons (Eurostat, Database 2015f).

⁴ A reporting state denotes an EU Member State that provides Eurostat with national data of the respective area (e.g. international migration) in a certain period of time.

to the EU countries stood at 35.9%. These two states were followed by France (332.6 thousand), Italy (307.5 thousand) and Spain (280.8 thousand). Comparing this to the EU-27 data for 2009 (no data for Belgium, Greece, and Bulgaria), the largest number of immigrants was admitted by the UK (566.5 thousand), Italy (442.9 thousand), Spain (393 thousand), Germany (346.2 thousand), and France (296.7 thousand). At least 3 million people immigrated to the EU-27 in 2009. In subsequent years, the total number of immigrants to the EU Member States amounted to over 3.2 million people per year. In the years 2010–2011, the UK remained the leader with its immigration at the level of 591 thousand and 566 thousand respectively, while in 2012 Germany outnumbered the UK with 592.2 thousand immigrants (Eurostat, Database 2015c). In comparison, taking into account absolute numbers, at least 2.8 million emigrants left one of the EU-28 Member States in 2013. Leading the list in terms of emigration was Spain (532.3 thousand), followed by the UK (316.9 thousand), and France (300.8 thousand). These three states reported on the total number of emigrants reaching 1.1 million – tantamount to 40.9% emigration from the EU states in total. Two other countries – Poland and Germany – had a comparable share in emigration all-in of 9.8% and 9.2%; more than 276.4 thousand people left Poland and 259.3 thousand people left Germany. In comparison, within the EU-27 (no data for Belgium, Greece and Bulgaria), the biggest number of emigrants left Spain (-380.1 thousand), the UK (-368.2 thousand), Germany (-286.6 thousand) and France (-264.6 thousand) in 2009. It should be noted that two subsequent places were taken by Romania (-246.6 thousand) and Poland (-229.3 thousand). In total, at least 2.4 million people emigrated from European Union countries in 2009. In the following years, the total number of emigrants from the EU amounted to more than 2.5 million people per year, with Spain topping the list between 2010 and 2012 (Eurostat, Database 2015a).

For a more in-depth overview of immigration to the EU Member States in 2013, we can analyze immigration by citizenship, country of birth and previous country of residence. Immigrants holding the citizenship of their target EU Member State – so-called “nationals” – constituted 831.7 thousand (24.5%) out of a total number of 3.4 million immigrants to the EU states in 2013. This means that the total number of non-nationals was 2.5 million, representing three fourth of immigration that year. Citizens of other EU-28 Member States amounted to 1.2 million (34.6% of the total number of immigrants to the EU Member States), and those of third countries to 1.4 million (40.5%). The share of stateless persons (6.1 thousand) and people of unknown citizenship (4.4 thousand) within the total immigration to the EU states in 2013 was 0.3% (Eurostat, Database 2015c). The focus on immigration by country of birth in 2013 perfectly supplements the aforementioned considerations. There were 658.7 thousand native-born immigrants (born in a reporting state) to the EU-28, accounting for 19.4%

out of a total of 3.4 million immigrants to the EU states. The foreign-born population amounted to 2.7 million people (80.3% of total immigration to the EU Member States), including 1.2 million foreign-born in another EU Member State than the reporting one (34.4%) and 1.6 million people born in third countries (45.8%). People with unknown country of birth in turn numbered 10.1 thousand, with a relative share of 0.3% in the total number of immigrants to the EU states in 2013 (Eurostat, Database 2015d). The analysis of immigration by state of previous residence allows to conclude that in 2013 the absolute numbers of immigrants coming from another EU Member State and from the non-EU-28 made a comparable contribution of 1.7 million people each to the total immigration to the EU states. The state of previous residence was unknown in the case of 25.3 thousand people, which represents less than 1% of total immigration (Eurostat, Database 2015e).

According to the latest Eurostat data on migrant population in the EU, 33.5 million people living in one of the EU Member States on 1 January 2014 had been born outside of the EU-28, while those born in a different EU Member State from the one of their residence amounted to 17.9 million. In addition, there were 19.6 million persons residing in an EU Member State who hold citizenship of a third country and 14.3 million people living in one of the EU Member States who were citizens of another EU Member State (Eurostat, Statistics Explained).

To conclude, according to Eurostat data on 1 January 2014 population of the European Union (EU-28) was 506.8 million people, which is about 0.2 million more than in the previous year (Eurostat, Database 2015h). If we focus exclusively on the extra-EU migration and use the narrower definition of long-term immigrant according to which such a person is a non-EU national whose previous place of usual residence was in a non-EU country and who established his or her usual residence in the territory of an EU state for a period of at least 12 months⁵, then such a definition was applicable to about 1.4 million incoming people in 2013. And yet in 2014 non EU-nationals residing in the EU constituted 4%, which meant 19.6 million people in the absolute numbers. For comparison, this number in 2011 was slightly higher, i.e. 20.1 million people and in the two consecutive years it gradually increased to reach over 20.2 million. In the total EU population, the proportion of non-EU nationals was constant and year after year constituted 4% between 2011 and 2014. In the recent years, the European Union has experienced net immigration, however, the quantitative predominance of immigrants over emigrants in absolute numbers decreases every year – between 2010 and 2013 it dropped from 748 thousand to 539.1 thousand people. It is worth complementing the above data with the information on foreign-born population

⁵ Note that the data do not include asylum seekers or refugees.

residing in the EU. Between 2011 and 2014 the proportion in the total EU population increased from 6% to 7%, which was represented by a positive change from 32.7 million people to 33.6 million in absolute numbers (European Commission 2015f).

Immigration from the third countries is of a great importance for the present and future EU demographic situation. In the recent years its impact on the Union's demographics in the context of demographic changes taking place in Europe has been broadly discussed, with particular regards to ageing of European societies (cf. European Commission 2006, 2010, 2015h). In 2013 alone, the total population change in the EU-28 amounted to 1.7 million people, consisting of the natural population increase of 80.7 thousand persons and the net migration plus statistical adjustment estimated at 1.6 million people. This means that international migration largely affected the positive population growth of the EU that year – the crude rate of total population change equaled to 3.4‰, including the crude rate of net migration plus statistical adjustment of 3.2‰ (Eurostat, Database 2015g).

In the context of the heretofore mentioned considerations, it is worth paying attention to what kind of impact international migration may have on the future demographic situation of the EU-28 countries in the light of Eurostat's long-term population projection from 2013 (Eurostat, Database 2015b). For this purpose the projected data for 2015, 2030 and 2060 have been juxtaposed with regard to the so-called "main scenario" of projection and its two variants – "reduced migration variant" (component of international net migration is reduced by 20%) and "no migration variant" (component of international net migration equals zero). According to the main scenario, the total population between 2015 and 2030 is to increase from 508.2 million to 518.5 million people and it will have increased by 14.7 million people in total by 2060. If we assume the reduced migration variant, the population will have increased from 508 million in 2015 to 514.6 million in 2030, but taking into consideration a longer perspective, it will have decreased by 1.1 million people between 2015 and 2060. In turn, in the no migration variant, the projected number of population will be smaller than in the case of the main and reduced migration scenarios, and will equal 507.3 million people in 2015. Eventually, the population of the EU – without the component of international migration – will decrease to 498.9 million by 2030 and reach a mere 442.8 million people in 2060, which indicates a substantial decrease of 64.6 million people. If we examine the rise in population from the base year of the projection, it will turn out that in comparison with the 507.2 million inhabitants of the EU-28 in 2013, in 2060 the EU population will have increased by 3.1% considering the main scenario and will have slightly decreased by 0.1% with regards to the reduced migration variant, or will have distinctively decreased by 12.7% taking into account the no migration variant (Eurostat, Database 2015b).

The general conclusion is straightforward: lack of international migration will result in a substantial decline of the EU population.

The increasing influx of migrants for various causes into Europe in recent years is considered one of the most important challenges the EU is facing today. To a large extent it is a consequence of events such as the Arab Spring and political revolutions or wars in the Arab world, especially in Libya, Syria, or Egypt. Other contributing factors were the establishment of the self-proclaimed Islamic State and its expansion, the political crisis in the Ukraine and finally, the armed conflict with the Russian Federation in the eastern part of the Ukraine. The EU which is perceived as a regional grouping of safe and highly developed states is the obvious destination for immigrants – both regular and irregular – coming not only from other European countries such as Kosovo or Albania, but also from African or Asian countries.

According to the official data provided by FRONTEX in its *Annual Risk Analysis 2015*, there were more than 283.5 thousand migrants – most of them refugee and asylum seekers – who entered the EU irregularly between border crossing points (BCPs) in 2014, which represented an increase of 164% compared to the previous year. This was a new record in number of detected migrants crossing the EU external borders illegally. It is believed that the events in Syria are the main cause of the “worst refugee crisis since the Second World War”. Immigrants from Syria were the top nationality among those detected at the borders in 2014. Many of them applied for asylum in the EU Members States but rather different ones than country of their entry into the EU. Among main migratory routes to Europe analyzed by FRONTEX, in 2014 the most detections of illegal border crossing between BCPs were reported in the case of Central Mediterranean sea route (encompassing Italy and Malta) – 170,664 thousand people, which means an increase of 277% in comparison to 2013. The second highest result of 50,834 thousand detections (+105%) was observed for Eastern Mediterranean route by sea and land (encompassing Greece, Bulgaria, and Cyprus), followed by Western Balkan land route (43,357 thousand; +117%). In the latter case, detections sharply increased at the Hungarian land border with Serbia towards the end of 2014. Among illegal immigrants traveling to the EU by Central Mediterranean route, the highest number – almost 40 thousand people – were Syrian nationals, while the second nationality in absolute terms were Eritreans, whose number reached over 33.6 thousand people. If we look at Eastern Mediterranean route in 2014, over 44 thousand people arrived to the EU territory by sea in comparison with 6.8 thousand people arriving by land. The top two nationalities were immigrants from Syria (31.7 thousand people) and Afghanistan (12.5 thousand people). In case of the Western Balkan route, nationals from Kosovo were on the top of nationalities of irregular immigrants in the number of 22 thousand people, and two consecutive

places in the ranking were Afghans (8.3 thousand people) and Syrians (7.3 thousand people). Migrants detected in 2014 were mostly adult males. The shares of women and children amounted to 11% and 15% respectively that year (European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States of the European Union 2015a: 5, 12–17).

The data cited above on people crossing the Mediterranean to reach Europe are obviously underestimated, as many of migrants were not detected. In addition, according to UNHCR's estimates, around 3.5 thousand people died or went missing in the Mediterranean Sea in 2014 (European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States of the European Union 2015a: 18). It is the highest number since 2011, when the number was estimated to be 1.5 thousand people. It was 500 people in 2012, 600 people in 2013 and again 1.5 thousand people in 2014 (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Northern Europe 2015). Moreover, according to UNHCR's data of 4 August 2015, since the beginning of the year there were already 224.5 thousand recorded arrivals through the Mediterranean to Europe with 2.1 thousand people dead or gone missing. To compare, in the previous year the number of arrivals by sea amounted to 104 thousand from January to August 2014 and 219 thousand in the whole 12 months. For the period January–August 2015 among top five nationalities arriving to Europe by sea were Syrians (38%), Eritreans (12%), Afghans (11%), Nigerians (5%) and Somalis (4%) (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees 2015b).

Until early August 2015, it was mainly Italy and Greece that were affected by the largest waves of immigrants arriving by sea. At the same time, the overland influx of immigrants has been increasing in Hungary, through the border with Serbia. Also, numerous attempts have been made by the migrants to reach Britain from Calais in France, through the English Channel.

In the first half of 2015 about 137 thousand people migrated to the EU, travelling by the Mediterranean Sea in unsafe and difficult conditions. This number is expected to increase significantly in the following months due to summer period, as it was the case in 2014 (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees 2015a: 6). In Greece nearly 130.5 thousand irregular migrants have been detected at its external borders in the first seven months of 2015 (European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States of the European Union 2015b).

3. The European Union's Response to the Crisis: European Agenda on Migration?

The EU seeks to create a common policy on migration and asylum, which is subject to the Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs of the European Commission. DG's policy portfolio related to the area of migration and asylum mainly covers issues such as legal and irregular migration, migrants' integration, readmission and return. The second area of action of the DG – internal security – focuses on the fight against organized crime and terrorism, police cooperation and the management of the EU's external border (European Commission, DG Migration and Home Affairs 2015b).

Migration crisis has prompted the EU at the beginning of 2015 to debate and work on current and comprehensive European agenda in the field of migration management. On the 20 of April 2015, the European Commission announced a ten-point migration plan for immediate actions to be taken in response to the crisis situation in the Mediterranean region. The plan was presented in Luxembourg by the European Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship Dimitris Avramopoulos during a joint meeting of the EU Foreign and Interior Ministers, chaired by the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/ Vice-President of the Commission Federica Mogherini (European Commission, Press Release Database 2015b). The proposal covered a number of important measures both general and specific, but it was not sufficient. The EU needed a comprehensive plan for the medium- and long-term perspective as a guidance document for further migration and asylum policy making in the face of new international conditions relating to numerous crises – especially military, political and humanitarian crises in the European neighborhood, which result in increased migratory flows in the Mediterranean region.

Following the proposal made by the Commission, the Member States committed themselves in a European Council statement of 23 April 2015 to take swift action to save lives and strengthen the impact of the EU actions. On 28 April, that commitment was followed by the Resolution of the European Parliament (European Commission, Press Release Database 2015c).

In the meantime, on 4 March 2015, the European Commission launched its work on the European Agenda on Migration (EAM) (European Commission, Press Release Database 2015c), presented on 13 May 2015 (European Commission 2015d). The document developed one of the ten priorities of the *Political Guidelines* proposed by

the EC President Jean-Claude Juncker⁶ into a set of initiatives based on four pillars to better manage migration: (1) reduction of incentives for irregular migration, (2) management of borders – saving lives and securing external borders, (3) Europe’s duty to protect – a strong common asylum policy, and (4) new policy on legal migration (European Commission, Press Release Database 2015c).

On this occasion, Federica Mogherini stressed that migration is a shared responsibility of the EU Member States and called for contribution to tackle this historical challenge of not only European, but also of a global dimension (European Commission, Press Release Database 2015c). The main objective of this Agenda was to address the increasingly complex phenomenon of migration⁷ in a comprehensive way, incorporating both internal and external dimensions of policy in that field. The European Agenda on Migration included two approaches specified in Table 2. The first one related to immediate measures to be taken in order to prevent human tragedies and strengthen management mechanisms in the situation in the Mediterranean. The second approach was more systematic and long-term as all the structural limitations of EU migration policy and its tools have been considered. It put forward a new medium- and long- term strategy of more effective management of migration rooted in above-mentioned four key pillars (European Commission, Press Release Database 2015d).

Among the immediate measures to be taken, the Agenda included provisions on planned development and implementation of two important mechanisms in connection with the crisis situation in the Mediterranean. The first one was supposed to be a system of relocation of refugees and asylum seekers arriving in large numbers to the EU. The first stage was to be proposed by the end of May 2015 and was concerned with the temporary distribution scheme of persons in clear need of international protection to all Member States in order to enable an appropriate response to high-volumes of arrivals within the EU. This system would be anchored in Article 78 (3) TFEU⁸, according to which: “In the event of one or more Member States being confronted by an emergency situation characterized by a sudden inflow of nationals of third countries, the Council, on a proposal from the Commission, shall adopt a provisional measures for the benefit of the Member State(s) concerned. It shall act

⁶ Eight months prior to becoming European Commission President, on 23 April 2014 in Malta, Jean-Claude Juncker put forward a five-point plan on migration. He called for more solidarity and shared responsibility in the EU migration policy. As the new President, he appointed new responsibilities to a Commissioner for Migration to develop new migration policy. This was one of the 10 priorities of the new political program (European Commission, Press Release Database 2015c).

⁷ In this context “migration” is understood broadly and incorporates international protection and asylum issues.

⁸ The provisions of the proposal shall be not applicable to Denmark and shall be applicable to the UK and Ireland under condition that they maintain their right to “opt-in” as it is described in the adequate Protocols to the Treaties.

after consulting the European Parliament” (European Union 2012). It was noted in the Agenda, however, that ultimately, the EU needs a permanent relocation mechanism. The Commission should put forward a legislative proposal by the end of 2015 in order to implement an obligatory and automatic relocation system to distribute refugees in need of international protection within the EU, taking into account voluntary measures taken by the Member States (European Commission 2015d: 4).

Table 2. Key Actions Proposed in European Agenda on Migration in 2015

Immediate action	Four pillars to manage migration better			
	Reducing the incentives for irregular migration	Border management – saving lives and securing external borders	Europe’s duty to protect: a strong common asylum policy	A new policy on legal migration
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A funding package to triple the allocation for Triton and Poseidon in 2015-16 and to finance an EU-wide resettlement scheme. • Immediate support to a possible CSDP (Common Security and Defense Policy) mission on smuggling migrants. • A legislative proposal to activate the emergency scheme under Article 78(3) TFEU by the end of May, on the basis of the special distribution key proposed in Agenda • A proposal for a permanent common EU system for relocation for emergency situations by the end of 2015. • A Recommendation for an EU resettlement scheme by the end of May followed if required by a proposal for more permanent approach beyond 2016. • EUR 30 million for Regional Development and Protection Programs. • Pilot multi-purpose center established in Niger by the end of 2015. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Addressing the root causes through development cooperation and humanitarian assistance. • Making migration a core issue for EU delegations. • An action plan on smuggling in May 2015. • Stronger action so that third countries fulfil their obligations to readmit their nationals. • Adoption of a Return Handbook and monitoring of the implementation of the Return Directive. • Reinforcement and amendment of the FRONTEX legal basis to strengthen its role on return. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthening FRONTEX’s role and capacity. • Union Standard for border management. • Strengthening EU coordination of coast guard functions. • A revised proposal on Smart Borders. • Strengthening the capacity of third countries to manage their borders. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishing a new monitoring and evaluation system for the Common European Asylum System and guidance to improve standards on reception conditions and asylum procedures • Guidelines to fight against abuses of the asylum system. • Strengthening Safe Country of Origin provisions of the Asylum Procedure Directive to support the swift processing of asylum applicants from countries designated as safe • Measures to promote systematic identification and fingerprinting. • More biometric identifiers passed through EURODAC. • Evaluation and possible revision of the Dublin Regulation in 2016. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modernization and overhaul of the Blue Card scheme. • A platform for dialogue with social partners on economic migration. • Stronger action to link migration and development policy. • Re-prioritizing funding for integration policies • Cheaper, faster and safer remittance transfers.

Source: own work based on European Commission (2015d).

The second key mechanism listed among the immediate key actions in the Agenda was to enable a safe and legal resettlement of an increased number of people in clear need of international protection from third countries in the EU, bearing in mind the target of 20 thousand resettlement places, designated by the UNHCR in 2012 for the EU per year, by 2020. It was assumed in the Agenda that the EC will prepare recommendations on the EU-wide resettlement scheme to offer 20 thousand places covering all Member States according to the distribution criteria specified in the Annex to the Agenda and taking into account the voluntary measures already taken by the Member States (European Commission 2015d: 4–5).

The common distribution key for both European relocation and resettlement schemes put forward in the Agenda was based on “objective, quantifiable and verifiable criteria reflecting the capacity of the Member States to absorb and integrate refugees, with appropriate weighting factors reflecting the relative importance of such criteria”. They were as follows: (1) the size of the population (40%) to reflect the capacity of a state to absorb a certain number of refugees, (2) total GDP (40%) to show the absolute wealth of a state and the capacity of a national economy to absorb and integrate refugees, (3) the average number of spontaneous asylum applications and the number of resettled refugees per 1 million inhabitants in 2010–2014 (10%) to indicate the efforts made by a state in the recent past, and (4) the unemployment rate (10%) to reflect the capacity of a state to integrate refugees (European Commission 2015d: 19).

Two weeks after the announcement of the European Agenda on Migration, the Commission took first specific actions setting out the immediate response to the emergency situation in the Mediterranean comprising of six measures (cf. European Commission, DG Migration and Home Affairs 2015a). Firstly, the EC announced a *Proposal for a Council decision establishing provisional measures in the area of international protection for the benefit of Italy and Greece* (European Commission 2015g), including the updated distribution key of 40 thousand refugees from Italy and Greece (cf. European Commission 2015a: 2–5) to the other EU Member States (Ireland, UK and Denmark excluded) in the framework of European relocation scheme. Secondly, the European Commission adopted *Recommendation on a European resettlement scheme* (European Commission 2015b) together with distribution key and numbers of people to allocate per each EU state, and thirdly, it developed *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions “EU Action Plan against migrant smuggling (2015–2020)”* (European Commission 2015e). As a fourth step, the EC published its *Staff Working Document on Implementation of the EURODAC Regulation as regards the obligation to take fingerprints* (European Commission 2015c). The fifth step of the undertaken measures was the announcement

of public consultation on the EU Blue Card and the EU's labor migration policies from 27 May 2015 to 21 August 2015 with a deadline extended to 30 September 2015 (cf. European Commission, DG Home and Migration Affairs 2015c). Finally, the Commission noted the new Operational Plan for Operation Triton.

The European Agenda on Migration proposed by the European Commission inspired the European Council to take further steps to cope with the migrant and refugee crisis in Europe (European Council/Council of the European Union 2015). In its final conclusions from the meeting on 25 and 26 June 2015 in Brussels, the Council agreed on some measures covering relocation and resettlement issues, return, readmission and reintegration policies as well as the question of cooperation with countries of origin and countries of transit. For the first group of subjects, the Council indicated interlinked measures to be implemented in order to help 60 thousand people in the light of the emergency migration situation in the EU, taking into account the European commitment to reinforce solidarity and responsibility. For the issue of relocation the Council pointed out that one of the measures will be "the temporary and exceptional relocation over two years from the frontline Member States Italy and Greece to other Member States of 40 thousand persons in clear need of international protection, in which all Member States will participate", whilst "all Member States⁹ will agree by consensus by the end of July on the distribution of such persons, reflecting the specific situations of Member States". For the resettlement, the Council noted that "all Member States will participate through multilateral and national schemes in the resettling of 20 thousand displaced persons in clear need of international protection, reflecting the specific situations of Member States" (European Council 2015: 2).

On 20 July 2015, an assembly of Justice and Home Affairs Council took place in Brussels, where the parties agreed on relocation of 40 thousand persons in clear need of international protection over two years, from Italy and Greece. It was decided that the first stage will cover 32.256 thousand persons, and the number will be supplemented by the remaining number of 7.744 thousand persons, by December 2015. Moreover, an agreement was reached on the resettlement of 22.504 thousand refugees in need of protection from outside of Europe to the EU states and Schengen Associated states (European Commission, Press Release Database 2015e). In this manner, joint decisions were made on relocation or resettlement of 54.760 thousand persons. The Table 3 summarizes the agreed contribution of the EU states in these mechanisms in absolute numbers, according to the settlement of 20 July 2015.

⁹ "Without prejudice to the specific situation of the United Kingdom, Ireland and Denmark pursuant to Protocols 21 and 22 to the Treaties. The UK will not participate".

Table 3. Numbers of Persons to be Relocated and Resettled as Proposed by the Council of the European Union on 20 July 2015

Member State	Relocation scheme – number of persons	Resettlement scheme – number of persons
Austria	0	1,900
Belgium	1,364	1,100
Bulgaria	450	50
Croatia	400	150
Cyprus	173	69
Czech Republic	1,100	400
Denmark	n/a	1,000
Estonia	130	20
Finland	792	293
France	6,752	2,375
Germany	10,500	1,600
Greece	n/a	354
Hungary	0	0
Ireland	600	520
Italy	n/a	1,989
Latvia	200	50
Lithuania	255	70
Luxembourg	320	30
Malta	60	14
Netherlands	2,047	1,000
Poland	1,100	900
Portugal	1,309	191
Romania	1,705	80
Slovakia	100	100
Slovenia	230	20
Spain	1,300	1,449
Sweden	1,369	491
United Kingdom	n/a	2,200

n/a – not applicable

Source: Council of the European Union (2015a): 5–6; Council of the European Union (2015b): 4–5.

Conclusions

EU actions are long overdue in the light of the current migrant and refugee crisis. The signs of a possible crisis situation appeared much earlier, at least as early as in 2011, with the outbreak of the Arab Spring. Of course it is difficult to answer the question of whether it was possible to estimate the number of incoming migrants so far in advance. The numbers rose sharply only in 2014 and further still in 2015. The EU had no crisis management plan in place for the present scale of migratory movements into its territory. However, it proposed a package of short-, medium- and long-term measures in the European Agenda on Migration in mid-May 2015. A significant number of these measures are adequate, but so far – in early August 2015 – they exist only on paper, as their implementation is a complex task. The chosen key points of the immediate action pool which relate to the crisis in the Mediterranean region are still subject to clarification – among others, these relating to the relocation and resettlement schemes. The proposed mechanisms are based on well-selected criteria, but to-date the expected number of people to distribute within these mechanisms is significantly underestimated. In the case of relocation, the assumed number of 40 thousand people includes only those from Greece and Italy, while it leaves out the issue of people traveling through i.e. the Western Balkans.

At present, there are no mechanisms that would effectively oblige the EU countries to implement both voluntary schemes – of relocation and resettlement – as a part of the EAM's immediate action package, in the interest of the whole group. It proves that the EU migration and asylum policy is still more national than European. Perhaps severe financial consequences would be effective, for example: transfers in the EU budget between countries in favor of those that not only complement to the assumptions of relocation and resettlement schemes and accept more migrants than the expected level but also create the conditions for integration.

Failure to find and implement common solutions will cause further European inertia, decentralization of common migration and asylum policy towards nationalization of policies and polarization of positions taken by individual states. This, in consequence may lead to further radicalization and nationalization of some of the countries, such as Hungary. The worst case scenario includes the possibility of questioning the safety of the existence of the Schengen Area and the pursuit of some EU Member States to restore traffic controls at the inner EU borders, which in the long term may threaten the whole area. Further developments of the migration and refugee crises and the lack of adequate cooperation in the EU could contribute not only to a significant weakening of the Schengen Area, but could even result in its collapse.

The introduction to the EAM is concluded with the following statement: “We need to restore confidence in our ability to bring together European and national efforts to address migration, to meet our international and ethical obligations and to work together in an effective way, in accordance with the principles of solidarity and shared responsibility. No Member State can effectively address migration alone. It is clear that we need a new, more European approach. This requires using all policies and tools at our disposal – combining internal and external policies to best effect. All actors: Member States, EU Institutions, International Organizations, civil society, local authorities and third countries need to work together to make a common European migration policy a reality” (European Commission 2015d: 2). The events of recent months show that these assumptions are, however, difficult to implement.

This difficulty is especially evident in relation to the Member States and EU Institutions, as the EU countries have divergent views on the migration crisis and its consequences due to their inclination to pursue their own interests and goals. Italy calls for a common solution, Hungary builds walls on the border with Serbia, France raises temporary camps in Calais for migrants heading to the UK, and Poland declares acceptance only of a small number of refugees. Member States do not seem to realize how difficult, almost impossible, it is to manage migration individually in the 21st century on the European continent, especially being a part of the EU and having formal and moral obligations arising from this membership or from the migration experience of their own citizens in the past.

Cooperation is necessary for several reasons. The crisis situation is far more complex than it was first assumed. People arriving to Europe can generally be referred to as “migrants” of a different status – regular or irregular, refugees, asylum seekers, economic migrants etc. They are gradually moving further into the continent, treating countries like Italy, Austria, Greece, Bulgaria and Hungary as transit countries *en route* to Germany, France or the UK. Countries that initially were not directly affected by the migration crisis such as Italy and Greece, are now experiencing the indirect effects just like i.e. Hungary. Some EU countries have enjoyed little interest of migrants i.e. Poland and the three Baltic states, which can be explained by the cultural determinants, language, unattractive geographic localization and climate, but also by socio-economic conditions and little general knowledge about the country.

The EU must develop a specific stance on international migration and define the response tools to be applied effectively. The limiting factor is that the European Union is not a unified state that can make quick decisions at the central level and implement them in a short time, in order to increase their effectiveness. The EU has a status of an international organization, thus it is governed by specific decision-making procedures which are time-consuming. At the moment, the EU does not have full competences

on migration and asylum issues, and consequently many actions and solutions must be agreed on with the governments of the Member States, which often do not speak with one voice.

Moreover, the EU has a selective immigration policy, which is largely market-based: the EU specifies its demand for immigrants of a certain status and certain socio-demographic characteristics due to the needs directed by the demographic situation, the economy, the labor market, pension protection system, or science and research. This, however, does not comply with the supply, which can be understood as the influx of a growing number of irregular migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. It should be noted however, that the EU – through its actions – should also represent certain moral values instead of making use of pure calculation of economic, social or demographic interests in its immigration policy.

The basic question is: to what point is the EU committed and able to cooperate effectively in the crisis? What is the minimum? So far, the course of events in the migration crisis shows that the EU countries have a rather selective approach to the rights and obligations arising from their EU membership, as well as towards the values and principles such as mutual trust, shared responsibility and cooperation. In a situation where there is no mechanism of coercion stemming from the EU *acquis*, the Member States lack the capability to reach a prompt consensus, which works against their best interests. In the face of the crisis, the Member States gradually adopt an attitude based on national egoism and isolationism, which stands in opposition to the concept and foundations of the European Union in its current form. Attention is drawn to the conservative attitude of the new Member States from Central and Eastern Europe such as Hungary, Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovakia that reiterate the argument of their limited socio-economic, logistic and financial capabilities as well as religious and cultural differences.

The migration and refugee crisis is yet another serious obstacle experienced by the EU in the last decade which reveals the need for deep reforms of the EU and the review of its status, as in the present scenario it is clear that it cannot cope with the challenges it faced, mainly due to countries working towards their own interests. What we observe today in Europe may be just the beginning of a larger geopolitical crisis in the Mediterranean, which may put the EU to an even more difficult test in the years to come.

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