



Understanding the Visegrad Group states' response to the migrant and refugee crises 2014+ in the European Union

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# Aim & Plan

- **Aim**

- to examine to what extent
  - the intensification of the migrant and refugee crises in Europe
  - the limited effectiveness of the EU migration and asylum policy &
  - the differences between the EU Member States in their experiences and approaches
- influence the situation, in which the Visegrad states attempt to find a common voice and formulate the basis for the future common policy on migration and asylum

- **Plan**

1. Visegrad Group – foundations
2. Background of the crisis in Europe
3. EU response to migrant and refugee crises
4. V4 countries towards the crisis and EU response
  1. Relocation and resettlement schemes
  2. Hungary – closer insight
  3. V4 political discourse in the field of migration and asylum since 2014
5. A future Visegrad policy on migration and asylum?

# Visegrad Group

## foundations

- established as the Visegrad Triangle on 15 February 1991 between the Czechoslovak Republic, the Republic of Hungary and the Republic of Poland
- turned into the Visegrad Four (V4) after the division of the former Czechoslovakia (1993)
- factors uniting these states in the early 1990s:
  - common history and cultural heritage
  - geographical proximity and location in Central Europe
  - recent exit from the Eastern bloc
  - multidimensional systemic transformation  
(from a communist centrally planned economy to a market-based democracy)
  - foreign policy's aspirations assuming membership in NATO and the EU
- since then the cooperation of four Central European countries developed in the framework of a non-institutionalized political initiative

# Visegrad Group

## strategic V4 documents

### Declarations

- Visegrad (1991)
- Kroměříž (2004)
- Bratislava (2011)

### Contents of Visegrad Cooperation

- approved by the Prime Ministers' Summit in Bratislava (1999)
- annex approved by the Prime Ministers at the Summit in Esztergom (2002)

### Other

- joint statements and declarations (general ones and on specific topics such as migration)
- annual presidency programs
- annual reports from the presidency

# Visegrad Declaration 1991

convergent basic objectives

- full restitution of state independence, democracy and freedom
- elimination of all existing social, economic and spiritual aspects of the totalitarian system
- construction of a parliamentary democracy, a modern State of Law, respect for human rights and freedoms
- creation of a modern free market economy
- full involvement in the European political and economic system, as well as the system of security and legislation

# Contents of Visegrad Cooperation 1999

## fields of cooperation

Education, culture,  
society, youth and sport

Science, technology

Environment

Infrastructure

Cross-border co-operation

### Internal affairs

- Cooperation in border and immigration affairs in the context of EU accession (Schengen agreement related issues)
- Harmonisation in combating illegal migration, illicit drugs transport and distribution, weapon smuggling, organised crime and terrorism (exchange of views in process of preparation of legislation)

### Foreign affairs

- Maintaining of the Visegrad regional profile
- Regular meetings and consultations of experts (on bi-, tri-, or quadrilateral basis)

# Kroměříž Declaration 2004

on cooperation of the Visegrad Group countries after their accession to the European Union

- key objectives set in the 1991 Declaration achieved
- declaration to continue developing the cooperation of the Visegrad Group taking into consideration the membership in the EU and NATO
- cooperation focused on strengthening the identity of the Central European region
- flexible and open cooperation based on concrete projects
- strong determination to jointly contribute to the fulfilment of the EU's common goals and objectives and to the successful continuation of the European integration
- readiness to use V4 unique regional and historical experience to contribute to shaping and implementing the EU's policies towards the countries of Eastern and Southeastern Europe

# Guidelines on the Future Areas of Visegrad Cooperation (2004)

## areas of cooperation

### Cooperation within the EU (i.a.)

- Fight against terrorism, organised crime and illegal migration
- Schengen cooperation
- Exchange of experiences on foreign development assistance policy

### Cooperation within the V4 area (i.a.)

- Consultations and cooperation on current issues of common interest
- Consultations, cooperation and exchange of experience in the area of:
  - Justice and Home Affairs
  - Schengen cooperation (including protection and management of the EU external borders)

### Cooperation within NATO and other IOs (UN, Council of Europe, OECD, etc.)

### Cooperation with other partners (i.a. EU and NATO candidates)

# Guidelines on the Future Areas of Visegrad Cooperation (2004)

## mechanisms of cooperation

### Governmental cooperation between V4 countries

- Rotating one-year presidency
- One official Prime Ministers' summit a year at the end of each presidency
- Occasional informal meetings of Prime Ministers and Foreign Ministers before international events
- Deputy Foreign Ministers meetings preceding the PM official summits
- Meetings of other ministers in V4 and V4+ format
- Intensified communication of V4 national coordinators (internal and inter-state coordination)
- Consultation and cooperation of Permanent Representations to the EU and NATO in Brussels, as well as in all relevant fora (UN, CoE, OECD, WTO, etc.),
- International Visegrad Fund and its structures

### Meetings of Presidents of V4 countries

### Cooperation of Parliaments of V4 countries

# Bratislava Declaration 2011

## 20th anniversary of the Visegrad Group

„The establishment of the Visegrad Group (...) significantly contributed to overcome the division of Europe imposed after World War II and facilitating the integration of our countries into the European and Euro-Atlantic structures”.

„The Visegrad Group is a recognised symbol of successful political and economic transformation and, in many areas, also a model for regional cooperation”.

„The Visegrad Group (V4) countries have become constructive, responsible and respected partners in Europe in implementing EU key priorities and programmes and, through their input, have contributed and will continue to contribute towards the processes of political and economic integration in Europe, including EU and NATO enlargement, in order to promote the prosperity, security and stability of the continent”.

# Bratislava Declaration 2011

## V4 in the future

„enhance the visibility of the Visegrad Group in third countries both through deeper V4 cooperation within the Common Foreign and Security Policy of the EU and through activities beyond the Union level”

„be more determined in translating their unique transitional experience and political perspective into the EU's external policies”

„actively contribute towards international efforts in combating terrorism, human and drug trafficking, illegal migration, extremism and other security threats and challenges”

# Background of the crisis in Europe

- The **scale and pace** of migration to Europe intensified and increased significantly.
- The term '**crisis**' is often used in media coverage and public debate (also in scientific discourse and academic works) to describe the current migrant and refugee situation.
- Early signs of crisis in Europe have been observed **since 2011** (the outbreak of the Arab Spring).
- The data provided by the UNHCR, IOM, Eurostat or Frontex reveals that numbers of people moving to Europe began to grow rapidly in 2014 on a year-to-year basis.
- There are two crises occurring in the years 2014–2016 in Europe:
  - the (im)migration one – demographic in nature
  - the refugee (asylum) one – refers to the issue of declared and actual legal status of the incoming population

More than 1.8 million **detections of illegal border-crossing** between BCPs along the EU external borders in 2015 (a 6-fold increase when compared with 2014).

701.6 thousand **detections of persons staying illegally** on the EU territory compared to 425 thousand in 2014.

Three migratory routes to the EU of key importance due to **the highest number of arrivals**:

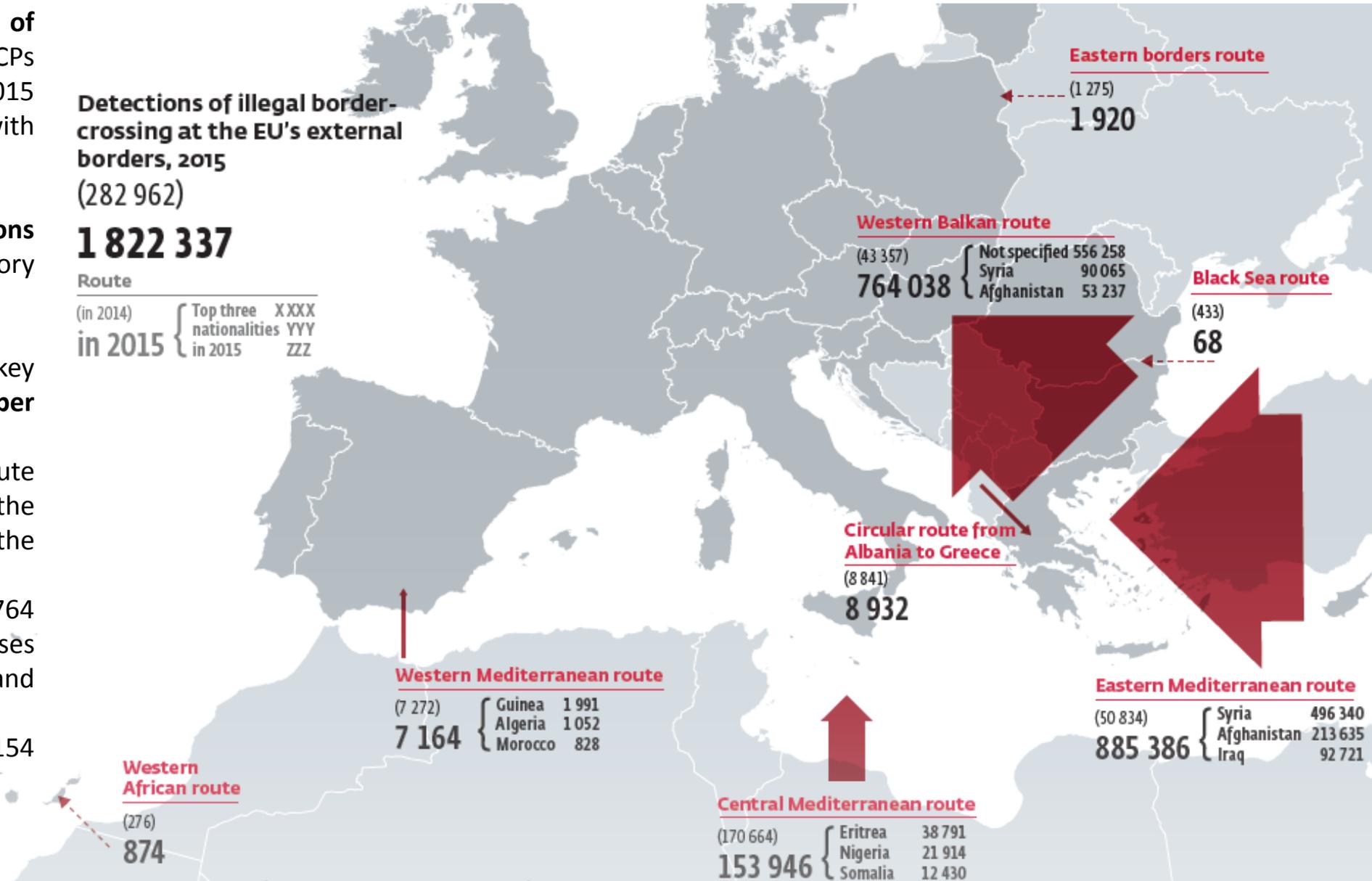
1. Eastern Mediterranean route (885.4 thousand), mostly the arrivals on the Greek islands of the Aegean Sea
2. **Western Balkan route** (764 thousand) with most cases detected mainly on **Hungary's** and Croatia's borders with Serbia
3. Central Mediterranean route (154 thousand)

**Detections of illegal border-crossing at the EU's external borders, 2015**  
(282 962)

**1 822 337**

Route

(in 2014) { Top three nationalities XXXX in 2015 YYY ZZZ



Increasing numbers of refugees and migrants take their chances aboard unseaworthy boats and dinghies in a desperate bid to reach Europe. The vast majority of those attempting this dangerous crossing are in need of international protection, fleeing war, violence and persecution in their country of origin. Every year these movements continue to exact a devastating toll on human life.

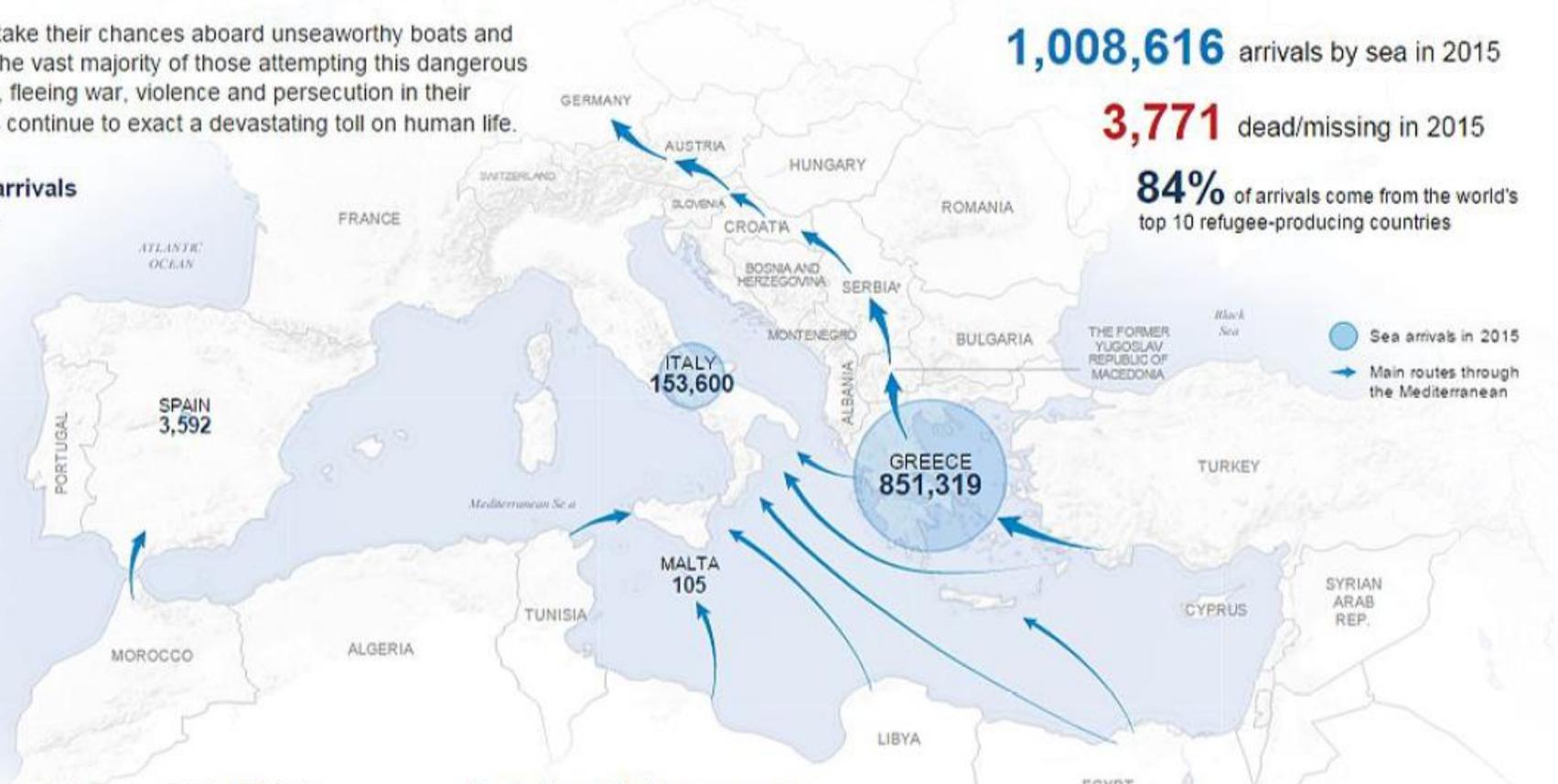
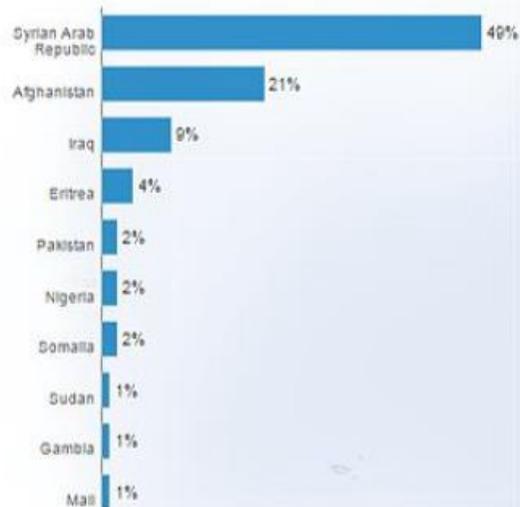
**1,008,616** arrivals by sea in 2015

**3,771** dead/missing in 2015

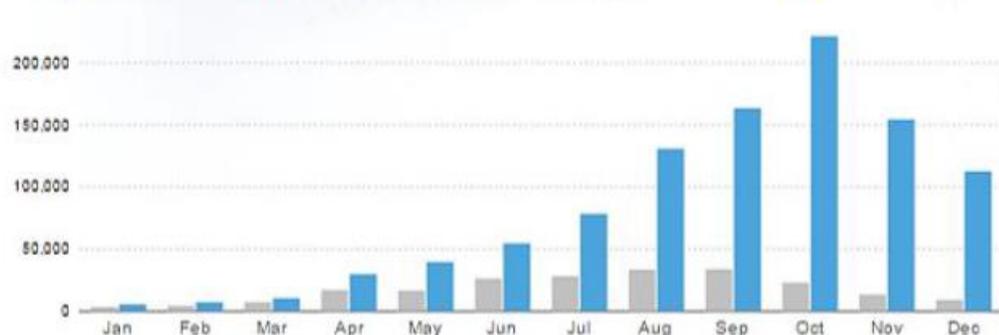
**84%** of arrivals come from the world's top 10 refugee-producing countries

**Top-10 nationalities of Mediterranean sea arrivals**

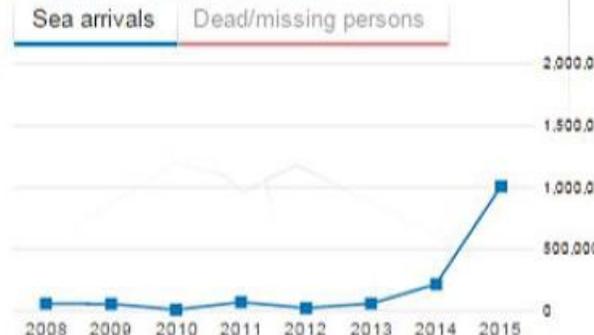
Top-10 nationalities represent 90% of the sea arrivals



**Comparison of monthly Mediterranean sea arrivals** 2014 2015



**Evolution - Mediterranean Sea**



**Demographics**

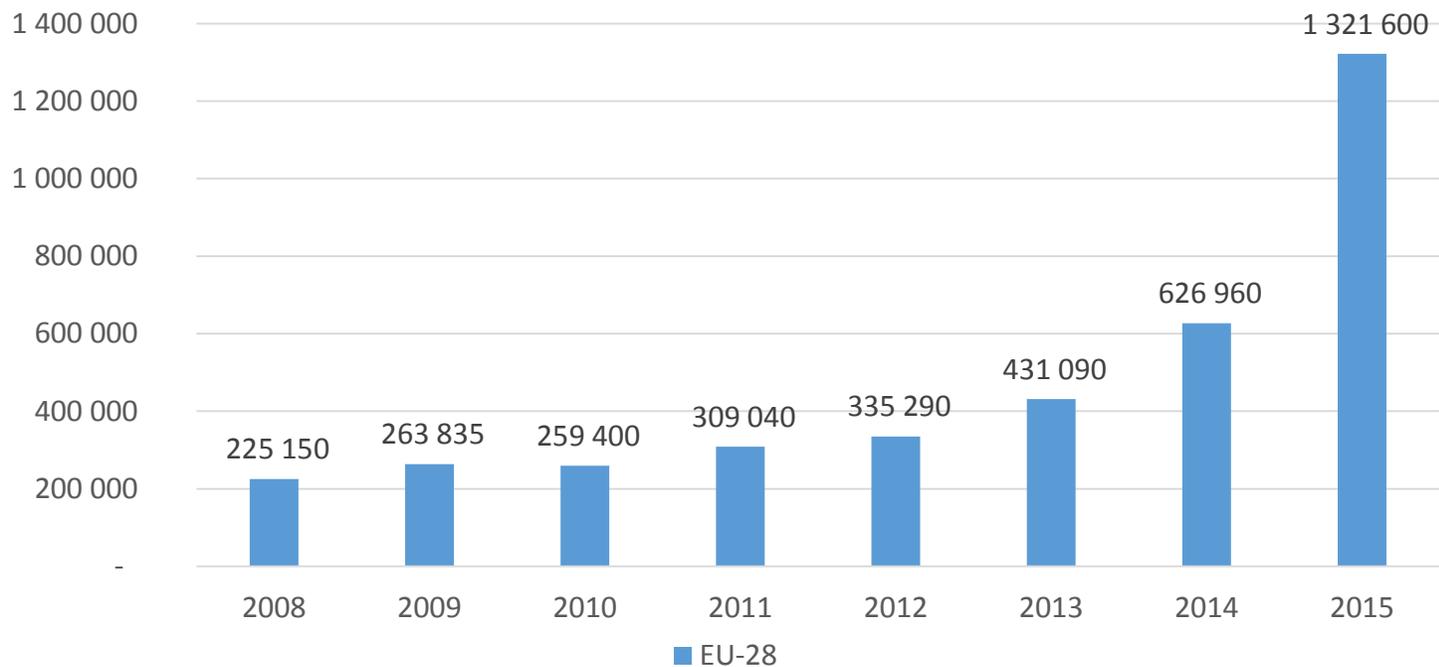


\*Serbia (AND KOSOVO): S/RES/1244 (1999)

The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations



## Asylum applications from outside the EU-28 in 2008–2015

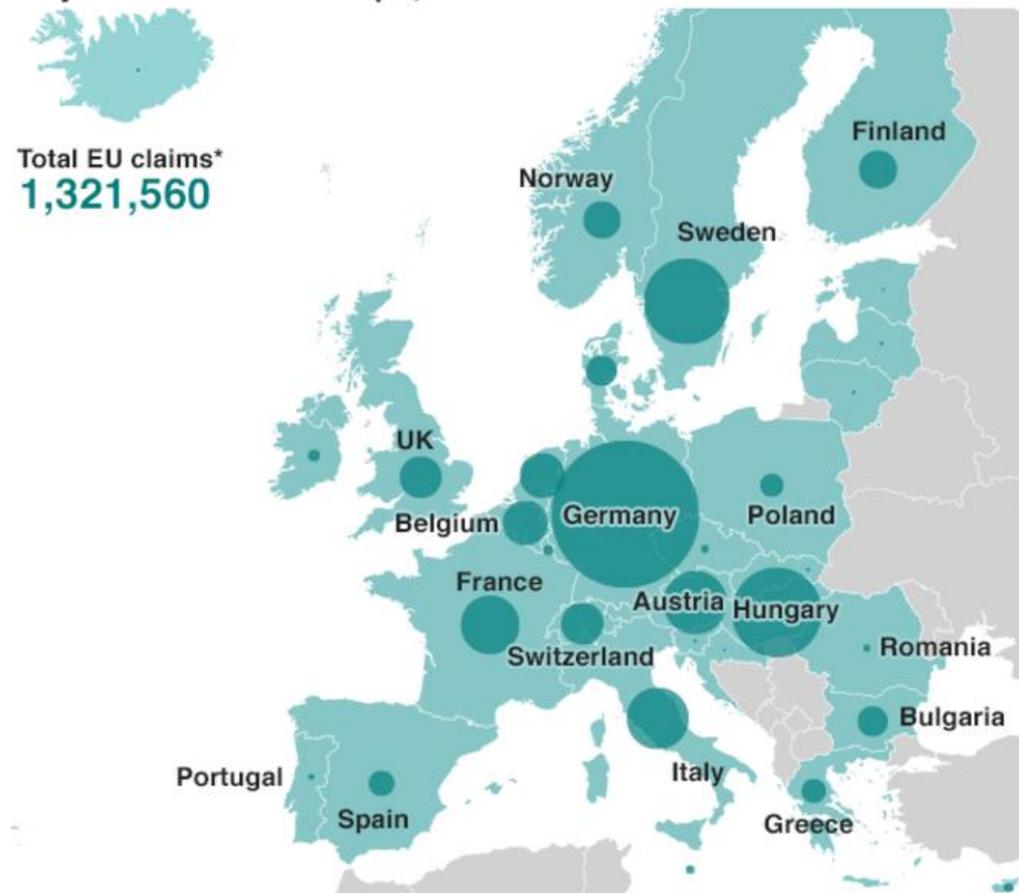


Between 2008 and 2015 the number of asylum claims in the EU-28 increased almost 5-fold, while just between 2014 and 2015 the growth was 2-fold.

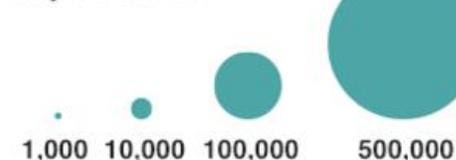
The top five main destination countries of applicants of international protection (asylum):

1. Germany
2. Hungary
3. Sweden
4. Austria
5. Italy

## Asylum claims in Europe, 2015



Number of asylum claims



■ No data

\* Map also shows claims for non-EU members Norway and Switzerland

# EU policy in the field of migration and asylum legal basis

- The term ‘EU/common migration and asylum policy’ is widely used by the EU, Member States, researchers and experts to denote the EU policy in the field of migration, international protection, border management and other related issues.
- *Chapter 2 Policies on border checks, asylum and immigration* of the *Title V Area of freedom, security and justice* of the TFEU identifies there (sub-)policies, respectively focused on:
  1. immigration
  2. asylum
  3. border management and control
- This policy is subject to shared competence between the EU and the Member States.
- The personal scope of this policy refers to: citizens of EU Member States, third-country nationals and stateless persons.
- The territorial scope of this policy is defined by the borders of the area of freedom, security and justice which is marked by external borders of the territory of the EU Member States.

# EU policy in the field of migration and asylum

„In the event of one or more Member States being confronted with an emergency situation characterised by a sudden inflow of nationals of third countries, the Council, on a proposal from the Commission, may adopt provisional measures for the benefit of the Member State(s) concerned. It shall act after consulting the European Parliament”.

(article 78(3) TFEU)

„The policies of the Union set out in this Chapter and their implementation shall be governed by the principle of solidarity and fair sharing of responsibility, including its financial implications, between the Member States. Whenever necessary, the Union acts adopted pursuant to this Chapter shall contain appropriate measures to give effect to this principle”.

(article 80 TFEU)

# EU response to migrant and refugee crises

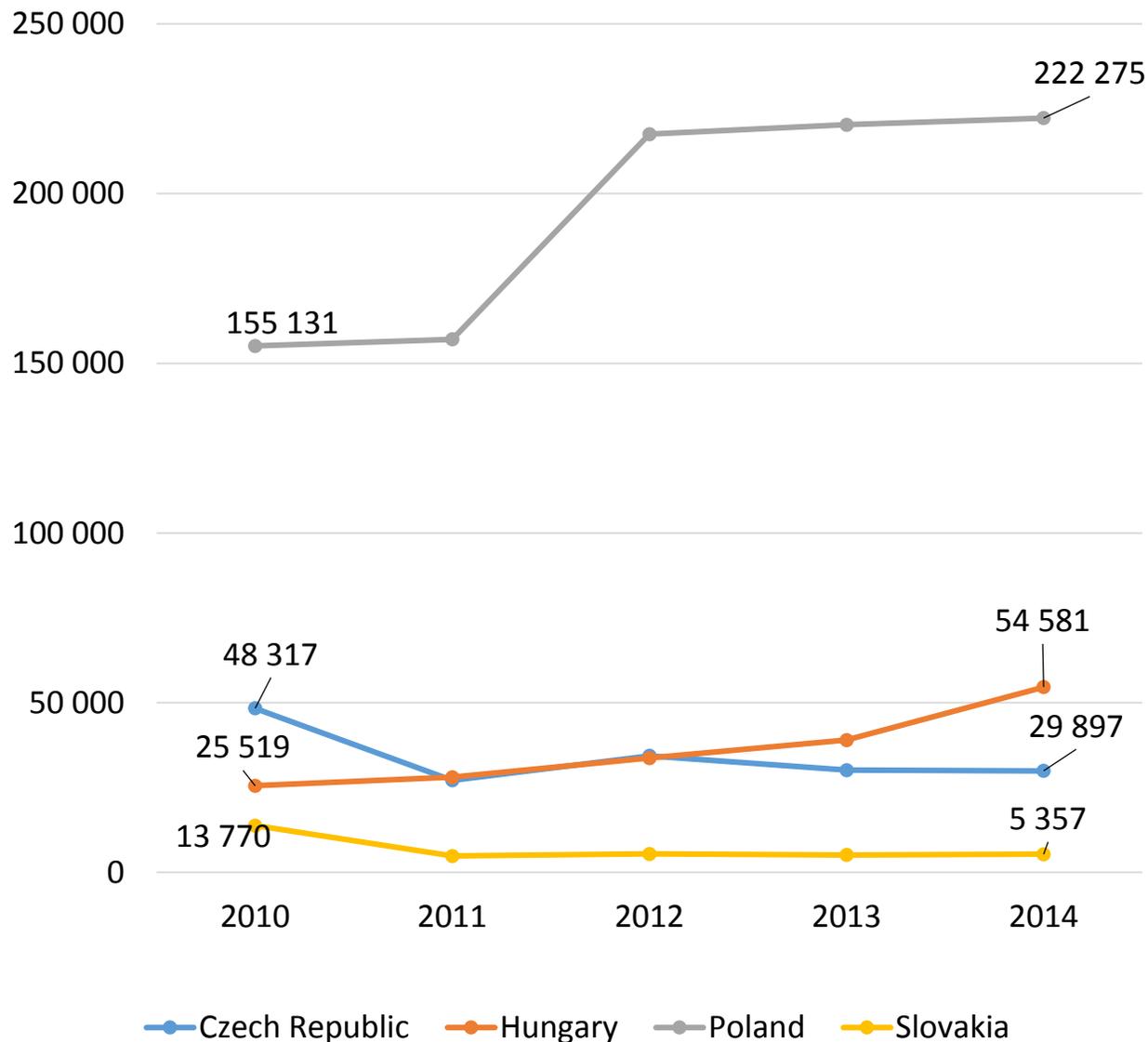
- The EU was not prepared for the crises and there was no crisis management plan to be promptly implemented.
- 2014: new migration policy as one of the ten priorities of the new Political Guidelines (EC)
- 2015: work started on the *European Agenda on Migration* (EAM) in March; announced by the European Commission on 13 May 2015
- EAM key actions:
  - I. Immediate action (emergency relocation and resettlement schemes, etc.)
  - II. Four pillars to manage migration better in medium and long term
    1. Reduction of incentives for irregular migration
    2. Border management
    3. A strong common asylum policy
    4. A new policy on legal migration

# EU response to migrant and refugee crises

- February 2016: the EC report on the implementation of the EAM:
  - too slow progress in the implementation of the priority actions
  - some strategic commitments have not yet been met or have been marginalized by different Member States
- Two crucial issues from the EU perspective:
  - how to solve the crisis situation already found in the EU
    - priority level(s) to face it – global, EU, national
    - the tools to be designed and implemented
    - stakeholders to be involved in the problem-solving process
  - steps to be taken in order to prevent the deepening of the crisis and to halt the influx of new migrants to the EU
    - the interests of the Member States
    - the integrity of the EU
    - the overall political climate in the EU
    - the respect for international law in the area of human rights and refugees

Migration and asylum situation  
in the V4 countries in times of crises

**Immigration to V4 states in 2010–2014**



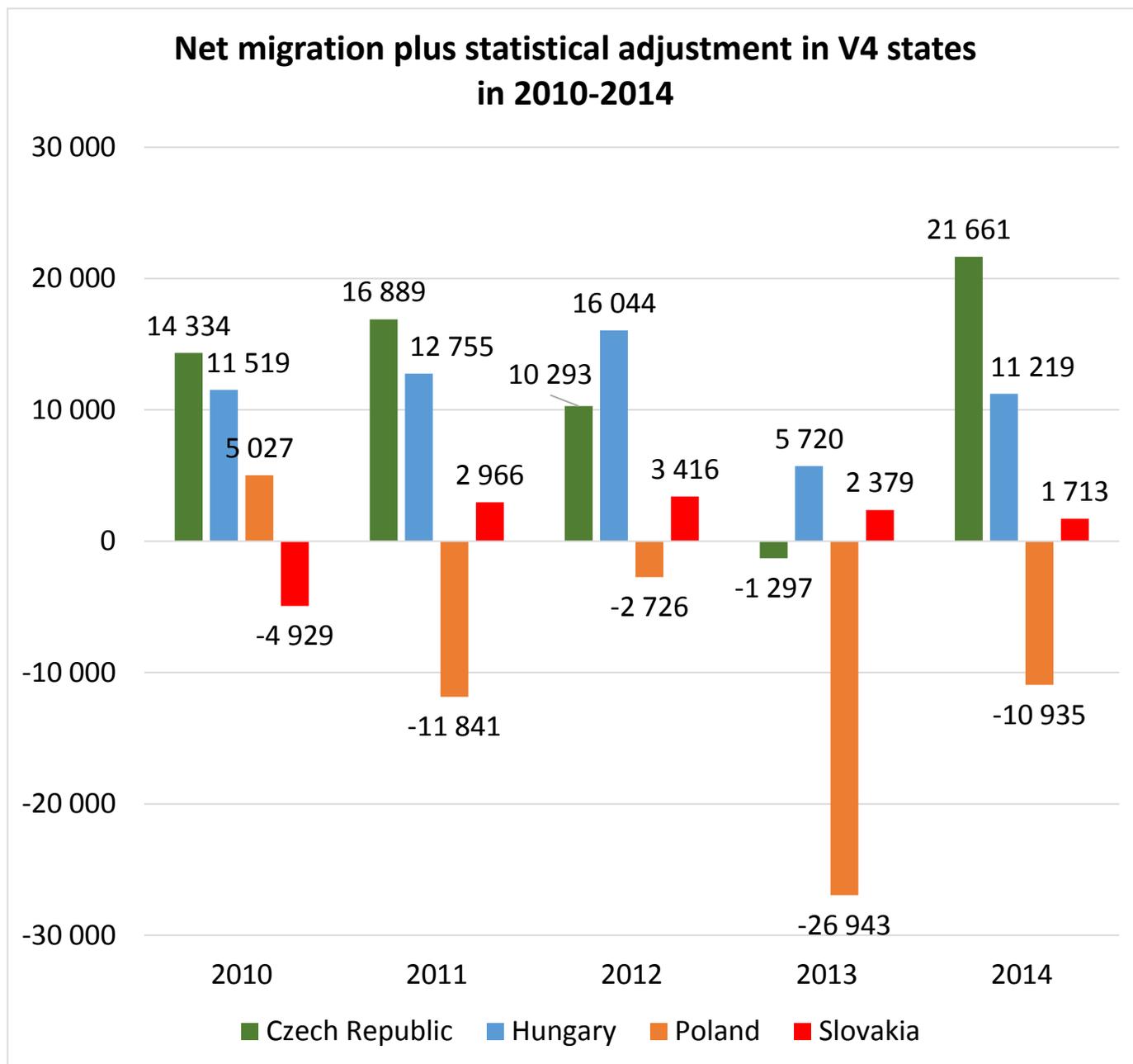
- ,Immigration' – the action by which a person establishes his/her usual residence in a MS for a period that is/ is expected to be of at least 12 months, having previously been usually resident in another MS or a third country.
- As of May 2016 the most complete Eurostat data on **long-term immigrants** is for 2014.
- A total of 3.8 million people immigrated to one of the EU-28 MS during 2014 (including flows between different MS):
  1. Germany (884.9 thousand)
  2. UK (632 thousand)
  3. France (339.9 thousand)
  4. Spain (305.5 thousand)
  5. Italy (277.6 thousand)
- Immigration to V4:
  - 312.1 thousand people immigrated to V4 states in 2014 (**only 8% of the total of the EU**).
  - Between 2010–2014 each year Poland recorded the biggest amount of long-term migrants in absolute terms among V4.
  - Hungary was recording an upwards trend from 25 519 people to 54 581, almost a 2-fold increase in that period.
  - In case of the Czech Republic and Slovakia the number of immigrants between 2010 and 2014 dropped.

- In 2014 immigrants with the citizenship of their target state ('nationals') constituted over half of the immigrants to Poland (58%), Slovakia (55%) and Hungary (52%), excluding the Czech Republic (19%).
- The biggest share of the citizens of non-EU-28 states among immigrants in 2014 was similar for three Visegrad states, i.e. for the Czech Republic (31%), Poland (30%) and Hungary (28%). Slovakia was an exception with 8%.
- Most native born immigrants came to Poland – they represented half of the total immigration inflow in 2014. For the other three countries the share varied from 15% for Slovakia up to 26% in the Czech Republic.
- Almost half of the immigrants to Hungary in 2014 were people born outside the EU-28. In case of Slovakia, the number was the lowest at 19%.

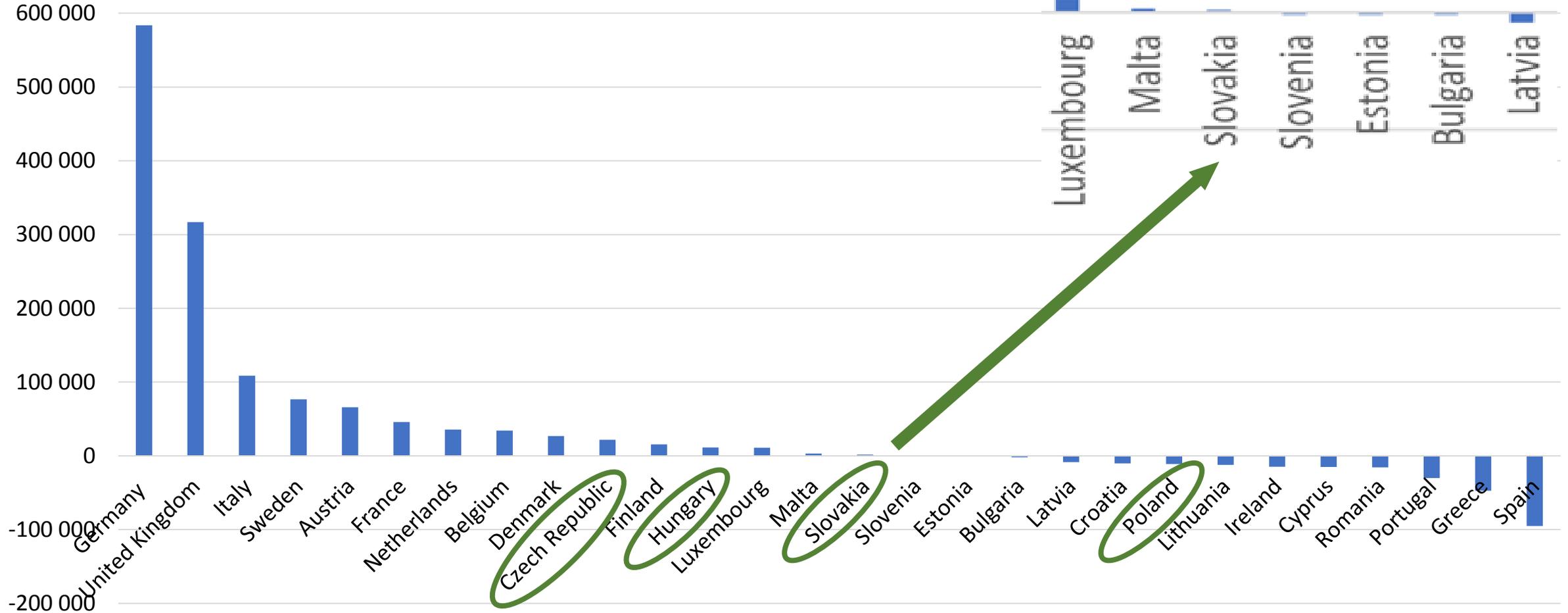
Share of immigrants staying previously outside the EU territory was the highest for Hungary and Czech Republic, representing almost half of all the immigration.

Immigration to V4 states in 2014 by country of previous residence			
State	Total number of immigrants	Non-EU-28 Member State nor reporting state	
		Total number	%
Czech Republic	29 897	13 567	45%
Hungary	54 581	26 172	48%
Poland	222 275	84 644	38%
Slovakia	5 357	1 076	20%

- V4 states varied in terms of their migration balance in the period of **2010–2014** and migration status of each country has evolved from year to year.
- Hungary was the only V4 state, which every year was a **net immigration one**.
- The Czech Republic was a **net immigration state** with the exception of 2013.
- Slovakia was a net emigration country in 2010, but since 2011 it has recorded a positive migration balance.
- Poland in 2010 was a net immigration country, but in the years 2011–2014 noted **more emigrants than immigrants**.



## Net migration plus statistical adjustment in the EU-28 in 2014



In 2014, slightly more than half of the EU-28 were countries of net immigration.

Czech, Hungary and Slovakia were among net immigration states.  
Slovakia was close to the state of balance.  
Poland was the only net emigration state.

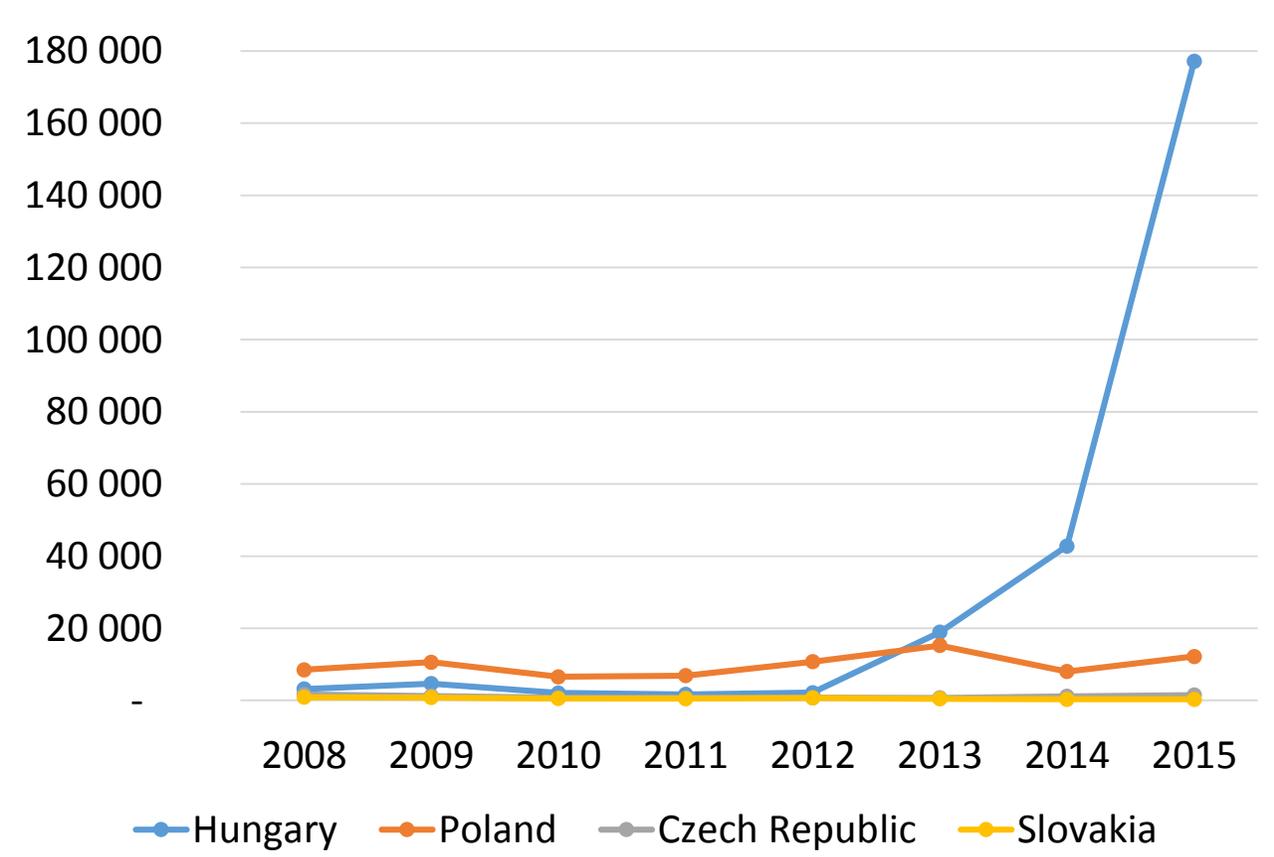
## Asylum applications from outside the EU-28 in V4 states in 2014-2015

	2014	% of EU-28 2014	2015	% of EU-28 2015
<b>EU-28</b>	626 960	100.0	1 321 600	100.0
<b>Hungary</b>	42 775	6.8	177 135	13.4
<b>Poland</b>	8 020	1.3	12 190	0.9
<b>Czech Republic</b>	1 145	0.2	1 515	0.1
<b>Slovakia</b>	330	0.1	330	0.0

In 2014 asylum applications (including the first time applications) submitted in Hungary equaled **6.8%** of the total 626 960 applications for the EU-28 and their share grew almost 2-fold to **13.4%** of the total 1.3 million applications one year later.

The migration and refugee crises have significantly affected only one of the four Visegrad countries since 2014 – **Hungary** and mostly as a result of its location on the **Western Balkan migration route** leading from the Mediterranean deeper into Europe.

### Asylum applications from outside the EU-28 in V4 states in 2008-2015



# V4 countries towards the crisis and EU response

Migrant and refugee situation in the EU and its neighbourhood is evolving and the EU continues to propose and implement its response in specific areas, which causes and will be causing varied reactions from different Member States, including V4.

Migration and refugee crises contributed to the rise of V4 interest in this matter, mainly in response to the direction of the solutions proposed by the EU.

Since mid-2015 the Visegrad countries have been discussing the migration and asylum issues in the EU context more often in order to coordinate their national positions on the EU forum and communicate a common stand.

It was an ad hoc reaction to the current events rather than a long-term strategy.

The four Central European countries were able to mark their position in a stronger manner as opposing some of the EU solutions, for example the relocation scheme.

It is difficult to notice a truly common approach of the V4 which could serve as a firm basis of a new regional common migration and asylum policy.

# Relocation and resettlement schemes

- Concerning the broad spectrum of different actions proposed under the EAM, the V4 countries were most critical and opposed towards the relocation and resettlement schemes.
  - opposition to the compulsory migrant (refugee) quotas per MS
  - opposition to automatic redistribution of asylum seekers among MS
- In September 2015, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary voted against the Council Decision on relocation of further 120 thousand asylum seekers from Italy and Greece to other EU Member States over next two years.
- In December 2015 Slovakia and Hungary – independently, but day by day – brought before the Court of Justice of the European Union an action for annulment of the aforementioned decision.

# Relocation and resettlement schemes

- In practice, the Visegrad Group countries do not take part in the implementation of the relocation and resettlement schemes.
- The Czech Republic is involved to a limited extent (4 persons effectively relocated from Greece and 52 Syrian asylum seekers resettled from Lebanon and Jordan by 13 May 2016).
- According to the third report of the EC of 18 May 2016 on relocation and resettlement:
  - Hungary and Slovakia **did not submit any indications of readiness** to relocate swiftly applicants for international protection from Greece or Italy under the temporary emergency relocation scheme (the „formal pledges”).
  - Most Member States (incl. Poland and Czechia) are so far **not submitting „formal pledges”** on a scale consistent with their allocation for the entire period covered by the Council Decisions.
  - Poland **does not respect its obligation** under the Council Decisions to indicate, every three months, the number of applicants who can be relocated swiftly to its territory.
  - The Czech Republic **continues rejecting relocation requests**, either without providing substantiated reasons or on grounds other than those specified in the Council Decisions on relocation.
  - Poland **continues to apply a *de facto* suspension** of the relocation procedure.

**Relocations from Greece by 13 May 2016**  
(EC, Third report on relocation and resettlement 18 May 2016)

EU Member State	Formally pledged	Effectively relocated	Commitment legally foreseen in the Council Decisions
Czech Republic	30	4	1 655
Hungary			988
Poland	65		4 321
Slovakia			652
<b>TOTAL</b>	4 078	909	63 302

**Relocations from Italy by 13 May 2016**  
(EC, Third report on relocation and resettlement 18 May 2016)

EU Member State	Formally pledged	Effectively relocated	Commitment legally foreseen in the Council Decisions
Czech Republic	20		1 036
Hungary			306
Poland	35		1 861
Slovakia			250
<b>TOTAL</b>	1 658	591	34 953

**Resettlement by 13 May 2016 under 20 July 2015 Conclusions and the '1:1 mechanism' with Turkey (in application since 4 April 2016)  
(EC, Third report on relocation and resettlement 18 May 2016)**

<b>EU Member State</b>	<b>Pledges made under the 20 July 2015 scheme</b>	<b>Total resettled under the 20 July 2015 scheme, including the 1:1 mechanism with Turkey</b>	<b>Third country from which resettlement has taken place with number of people resettled</b>
<b>Czech Republic</b>	400	52	Lebanon: 32; Jordan: 20
<b>Hungary</b>	0	0	
<b>Poland</b>	900	0	
<b>Slovakia</b>	100 (Slovakia has resettled 149 Assyrians, outside of the 20 July 2015 scheme)	0	
<b>TOTAL</b>	22 504	6 321	A total of 177 people were resettled from Turkey under the 1:1 mechanism; 166 of whom through the scheme of 20 July 2015

# Hungary – closer insight

- It was the only of the V4 states:
  - directly exposed to migrant and refugee crises due to its geographical proximity to the Western Balkan
  - which reintroduced internal border control due to a large influx of migrants on its land border with Slovenia (17–26/27 October 2015)
  - which built a fence on its border with Serbia and later on with Croatia to reduce the inflow of migrants into and through its territory
- Hungary was the only V4 state, which every year in 2010–2014 was a net immigration country.
- In 2015 the second migration path in terms of detections of illegal border crossing between BCPs was Western Balkan route (764 038 detections) with most cases detected on Hungary's and Croatia's borders with Serbia.

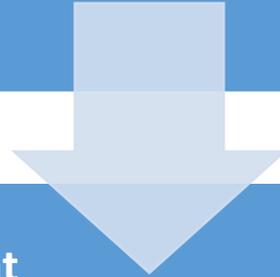
# Hungary – closer insight

- Already in 2014 Hungary became the 5th top receiving country of applicants for international protection (42 775) in the EU and in 2015 it was on 2nd position (177 135).
- In 2014 asylum applications submitted in Hungary equalled 6.8% of the total 626 960 applications for the EU-28 and their share grew almost 2-fold one year later.
- The Commission proposed in its second package of anti-crisis measures under the EAM to relocate another 120 000 asylum seekers from Italy, Greece and Hungary to other EU MS, over two years, on the basis of a compulsory distribution key.
- Hungary did not want to benefit from the emergency relocation scheme as did not consider itself to be a 'frontline' Member State.
- Consequently the Council Decision (EU) 2015/1601 of 22 September 2015 covered only Italy and Greece.
- Hungary was the second V4 state after Slovakia to bring before the Court of Justice of the European Union an action for annulment of the aforementioned decision.

# V4 political discourse in the field of migration and asylum since 2014

In 2014 most of common Visegrad official statements were concentrated on:

- Ukraine-related issues
- defence cooperation
- V4 relations with some partners (Slovenia and Austria, Bulgaria and Romania, Swiss Confederation, the Republic of Korea, the Eastern Partnership)



In 2015 the topic shifted to the further escalation of the migrant and refugee crises in Europe:

- raised and discussed at the forum of the Visegrad Group
- regularly appeared in official political statements and declarations and other V4 source documents

# V4 documents analyzed between January 2015 and April 2016

1. Conclusion from the Meeting of Foreign Affairs Committees of V4 Parliaments Representatives of the Foreign Affairs Committees of the Chamber of Deputies and Senate of the Czech Republic, the Hungarian National Assembly, the Sejm and the Senate of the Republic of Poland and the National Council of the Slovak Republic, Bratislava, 25 February 2015
2. Co-Chairs' Statement Slovakia and Denmark, 3rd Meeting of Foreign Ministers of the Visegrad, Nordic and Baltic States, High Tatras, 12–13 March 2015
3. Bratislava Declaration of the Visegrad Group Heads of Government for a Stronger CSDP, Bratislava, 19 June 2015
4. Joint Statement of the Heads of Government of the Visegrad Group Countries, Bratislava, 19 June 2015
5. Press Statement on the occasion of the Summit of V4 Prime Ministers and the President of the French Republic, Bratislava, 19 June 2015
6. Joint Statement of the Heads of Government of the Visegrad Group Countries, Prague, 4 September 2015
7. Joint Statement of the the Prime Ministers of the Visegrad Group Countries, Prague, 3 December 2015
8. Joint Statement of the the Prime Ministers of the Visegrad Group Countries, Brussels, 17 December 2015
9. Joint Declaration of Ministers of the Interior of the Visegrad Group, Prague, 19 January 2016
10. Joint Statement on Migration of the Prime Ministers of the Visegrad Group Countries, Prague, 15 February 2016
11. Program of the Slovak Presidency of the Visegrad Group July 2014 – June 2015 “Dynamic Visegrad For Europe And Beyond”
12. Report of the Slovak Presidency of the Visegrad Group July 2014 – June 2015
13. Program for the Czech Presidency of the Visegrad Group (July 2015–June 2016) “V4 Trust”

# Conclusions of V4 official political documents analysis (January 2015 – April 2016)

- V4 states are opposed to the mandatory relocation scheme based on fixed number of asylum seekers to be automatically relocated to other EU Member States.
- They postulate a voluntary nature of EU solidarity measures with the assumption that each EU Member State should implement best practices based on its own experience.
- They want to increase interest of the EU and its institutions in the Western Balkan migration route.
- V4 countries pay limited attention to the situation of refugees themselves.
- Consequently, the V4 states are focused on:
  - elimination of the root causes of migratory pressure in Europe
  - EU and its MS full control at the external border and their effective protection
  - maintenance and improvement of Schengen area

# Conclusions of V4 official political documents analysis (January 2015 – April 2016)

- The EU should have a key focus on:
  - the root causes of increasing migration flows from Africa and Middle East to Europe
  - counteracting illegal migration
- It is the EU as a whole that should take care of the most comprehensive implementation of solutions to the migration and refugee crises through effective:
  - external border control
  - hotspots
  - readmission agreements
  - return policy
- The influx of migrants has to be reduced & the control over the EU external border has to be regained.
- The migrants in real need of international protection have to be correctly distinguished from „economic” and other ones – condition for the V4 activity and involvement in further EU actions.
- The proper functioning of the Schengen area with free movement of people and without internal borders is of key importance – impossible without an effective external border management.

# V4 Presidency Programs in 2014–2016

- The issues of migration and the crisis in the EU have not been mentioned in the Program of the Slovak Presidency 2014/2015 “Dynamic Visegrad for Europe and Beyond”.
- The events observed in the field of migration and asylum contributed to the inclusion of these problems into the Program of the Czech Presidency “V4 Trust”, in force from July 2015 to June 2016.
- One of the thematic priorities of the Czech Presidency 2015–2016 was formulated as  
“active practising of **the solidarity principle in the EU**”  
assuming that the Czech Republic will “continue in the current **practice of close cooperation and coordination of positions of the V4 countries** both before important EU meetings, as well as during regular meetings at the political and expert level”.
- Asylum and migration issues were indicated among key areas of cooperation of V4 Prime Ministers and V4 ministries of the interior during the Czech Presidency.

# A future Visegrad policy on migration and asylum?

The stand towards the migration and refugee crises and proposed EU-wide solutions pulled the V4 countries together, however not enough to contribute to the development of well-established cooperation within the Visegrad Group or to favour the institutionalization of the Group as an independent body.

- These states seek to:
  - coordinate their national positions on important issues concerning migration and asylum
  - to express their joint stand at the EU level
  - to make their common voice audible among 28 EU Member States
  - to strengthen their political position within the EU
- The closer cooperation of the four Visegrad countries in times of migrant and refugee crises in the EU should be seen as fragmentary and ad hoc.
- Coordination of four states' positions into one common stand within the V4 is not always effective – not formalized and institutionalized; coordination is realised in the form of political instructions, which are in fact non-mandatory.
  - e.g. Poland voted for the Council Decision (EU) 2015/1601 of 22 September 2015 establishing a temporary procedure for additional 120 thousand persons to other EU Member States over the next two years

# A future Visegrad policy on migration and asylum?

Contents of Visegrad Cooperation 1999 assumed that the V4 states will act towards the maintaining of the Visegrad regional profile in the field of foreign affairs.



Guidelines on the Future Areas of Visegrad Cooperation 2004 assumed that future cooperation between four Visegrad states within the EU will encompass consultations and cooperation on current issues of common interest.



Recently Cooperation within the Visegrad Group assumes intensive coordination of national positions of V4 states in European affairs. To make the V4 coordination more efficient, regular coordination meetings were organized in 2014/2015 under the Slovak Presidency before important meetings at the EU level.



The Czech Presidency 2015/2016 in its annual program stated that its program will follow the Declaration 2004 and continue in the current practice of close cooperation and coordination of positions of the V4 in the areas of: economic policy, transport, energy, climate protection, asylum and migration.

# A future Visegrad policy on migration and asylum?

- It seems as if the membership in the EU (and NATO) was mainly to provide V4 states with:
  - favorable conditions for their regional socio-economic development and security
  - realization of their own interests
- This may favor the formation of a opposition subgroup within the EU.
- The V4 countries appear to see the current migration and refugee situation in Europe through the prism of illegal migration and related challenges.
- It seems that the V4 states perceive the people arriving in Europe in large numbers as illegal migrants, mostly for economic reasons, rather than asylum seekers and refugees for political or humanitarian reasons.

“The Economist” in early 2016 noted that what seems to unite the V4 countries is an “anti-migrant sentiment” which stems from the ruling political groups in these states. What is more, it seems to be used to “implement an illiberal agenda on other fronts”.

Anti-migrant and anti-refugee rhetoric noticeable from the second half of 2015 in Visegrad states is in line with the eurosceptic moods observed in other EU countries.

**It is the populist politics currently dominant in Visegrad states combined with the lack of understanding of migration and refugee issues, limited experience in this field and the fear of the unknown, that are contributing factors for the tightening of ties among the four countries and the strengthening of the ruling powers' positions.**

Thank you for your attention!



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