

REFUGEES AND MIGRATION

A EUROPEAN MOOD BAROMETER

While the topic of refugees and migration has been in the public eye for some time in Germany and throughout Europe, it has developed an entirely new dynamic with the latest influx of asylum seekers into Europe. Many believe the current streams of refugees represent the most serious challenge the European Union has had to overcome to date.

The Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung has recently compiled articles on this topic composed by staff from various field offices of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung in a comprehensive publication. The articles reflect the ways the topic of refugees and migration is viewed in different regions around the world and the ways individual countries are dealing with the current crisis. From among the large number of interesting articles in this publication, we have selected several that illustrate different European perspectives and present them in updated versions.

For anyone interested in further views from Europe as well as from around the world, we recommend the full publication, which is available (in German) at: <http://www.kas.de/stimmungsbild-migration>.

ITALY

*Caroline Kanter** (Finalisation: 19 Nov 2015)

The Mediterranean: Gateway to Europe

Since the beginning of 2015, 139,770 refugees have reached the Italian beaches. The proportionately largest groups are Eritreans (37,495), Nigerians (19,205) and Somalis (10,722).¹ By 1 November, 68,725 asylum applications had been submitted.

The Southern European country was confronted with the large wave of refugees already last year and subsequently had to deal with the ensuing political and social challenges; contrary to what happened in other European countries, the numbers in Italy have, in fact, declined in 2015 compared to the previous year, dropping by 9.09 per cent.



Refugees on the Riviera: The French Italian coastline has become a symbol for Europe's refugee problem. | Source: © Jean-Pierre Amet, Reuters.

* Head of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung's office in Italy.

1 | Cf. Polchi, Vladimiro / De Panfilis, Giacomo 2015: Osservatorio immigrazione, nel 2015 menosbarchidell'annoscorso: tuttiidati, La Repubblica, 27 Oct 2015, in: http://www.repubblica.it/solidarieta/immigrazione/2015/10/27/news/osservatorio_immigrazione_140_mila_sbarcati_nel_2015_9_in_meno_dello_scorso_anno-126027064 (accessed 15 Dec 2015).

Currently, there are some 100,450 refugees living in Italian reception facilities.² Measured against the overall Italian population, this represents just over 0.15 per cent.³

The dispersal of the refugees across the different Italian regions is meant to be conducted according to a distribution key that has been in place since 2011. However, several regional presidents have rejected the call by the Italian Ministry of the Interior to fill the agreed quotas and relieve overburdened regions through a more efficient and rational distribution of the migrants. In a heated public dispute in June 2015, Roberto Maroni (Lombardy, *Lega Nord*) threatened to cut subsidies for any communities in his region that declared themselves willing to accept more refugees.

To date, Lombardy has accepted the largest proportion of refugees at 14 per cent; at twelve per cent, Sicily is in second place, followed by Latium at nine per cent.⁴ Three of 20 regions are therefore accepting 35 per cent of the people seeking refuge.

Due to the good weather conditions and calm seas, the floods of refugees arriving on the beaches of southern Italy increased during the summer months, which intensified and changed public discourse and the reporting in the Italian media. At the end of last year, surveys indicated that the issues seen as the country's greatest challenges by the public were unemployment (60 per cent), the economic situation (37 per cent) and only in third place immigration (18 per cent).⁵ By late summer, public perception had changed. At 25 per cent, immigration was cited as the second-greatest challenge to the Southern European country after the economic crisis.⁶

2 | Cf. *ibid.*

3 | Africa e Mediterraneo 2014: Immigration Quiz, Africa e Mediterraneo, p. 2, in: http://africaemediterraneo.it/public/2015/04/Immigration_quiz_Risposte.pdf (accessed 15 Dec 2015).

4 | Cf. Polchi / De Panfilis, n. 1.

5 | Testa, Alessandro 2015: Eurobarometro Autunno 2014, Italiani sfiduciati ed Egoisti, Lumsanews, 27 Feb 2015, in: <http://www.lumsanews.it/2015/02/27/rapporto-eurobarometro-italiani-sfiduciati-ed-egoisti> (accessed 27 Feb 2015).

6 | IPSOS 2015: Sondaggio immigrazione, Renzi bocciato secondo IPSOS, Corriere della Sera, 6 Jul 2015, in: http://termometropolitico.it/1180117_sondaggio-immigrazione-renzi-bocciato-secondo-ipsos.html (accessed 15 Dec 2015).

The Mood in the Country

Dissatisfaction among the Italian population grew and the number of critical voices speaking out against refugees increased. The criticism was directed mainly at the government's poor crisis management and the lack of support and solidarity on the part of Europe, and there were increasing fears about Italy's domestic and external security.

The dissatisfaction of the Italian population rose in the past several months, as did criticism of the crisis management of the government.

During the last few months, there have been occasional acts of violence and protests by the Italian public, which some neo-fascist groups, such as *CasaPound*, latched onto.

Public discourse has been characterised by vocal disputes among politicians. Political verbal duels and harsh criticism by the opposition were eagerly picked up on in all the media – particularly social media – and consequently helped to colour the mood in the country.

While there have been sporadic acts of violence against refugees, one must emphasise the great willingness to help as well as the civil society and volunteering by many Italian citizens. This applies to the initial assistance given to the refugees when they reach southern Italy, where voluntary aid organisations provide assistance, and to the engagement in the local reception centers in the different Italian regions. The citizens' great willingness to provide help has manifested particularly at a local level. The support from the Italian population has made a particularly beneficial impact in the so-called *Sistema di Protezione per Richiedenti Asilo e Rifugiati*, which aims at providing an "integrated welcome".

Political Reactions: between Crisis Management and Polemics

Considering the increasingly negative mood among the population, the Italian government has been keen to keep the situation under control. On the one hand, it looked to its European partners to play their role; on the other hand, it put in place a number of measures and provided additional funding to improve the organisation of the reception and distribution of the refugees. These initiatives and efforts on the part of the Italian government must also be seen in the context of strained public budgets, the high level of national debt and the extensive current reforming

measures. A number of government departments and programs were therefore hit by heavy cuts and had taken hard-hitting savings measures.

Contrary to the opposition, the government responded to the above-mentioned violence with criticism and a heavy hand. Calls for greater support from Europe went hand in hand with a rejection of the Dublin Regulation, which the government of Prime Minister Renzi no longer considers workable as the circumstances since its adoption have changed radically, as shown by the refugee numbers and their countries of origin.

From an Italian perspective, the Dublin agreement is no longer appropriate due to dramatically changed circumstances.

Despite the increasingly negative stance of the population, it is to be expected that the Italian government will continue to implement its plans for the acceptance of refugees. "We will continue accepting refugees. There are 84,000 people involved. In Italy, there are 8,100 communities in total and 60 million inhabitants, i.e. ten migrants for each community on average. That is the 'invasion' that is being discussed. This has little to do with politics: we are dealing with people's lives here", said Prefect Mario Morcone, Director of the Department for Civil Liberties and Migration at Italy's Ministry of the Interior.⁷

Once the wave of refugees had reached other EU member states by the summer of 2015 – first and foremost Germany – and measures had been taken at a European level – such as the distribution of 120,000 refugees across the EU member states in September 2015 – the Italian government felt justified in its demand for a European solution and stated with a certain amount of sympathy that other member states had now also "woken up".

Over the last few months, the Italian government has repeatedly called attention to the causes of the refugee crisis – such as wars, poverty and dictatorships in the counties of origin – and called for stronger action to be taken to counter those. Due to the fact that approximately 90 per cent of the refugees arriving in Italy set out on their journey to Europe from Libya, that country plays a key role in the eyes of the Italian government.

7 | Reuters 2015: Migranti, per prefetto Morcone in Italia non è emergenza, Reuters Italia, 22 Jul 2015, in: <http://it.reuters.com/article/topNews/idITKCN0PW0KN20150722> (accessed 15 Dec 2015).

In a oft-referenced and clear statement made on 18 August 2015, Italy's President Sergio Mattarella had called for greater humanity and openness in dealing with refugees. "The humanity we show in receiving desperate refugees, the intelligence with which we face migratory phenomena and the firmness with which we fight human traffickers will be the way we show the world the quality of democratic life." Mattarella called upon Italian politicians and society to act more openly and with greater care, and spoke about the need to be more assertive in defending one's own values and ideals.⁸

The opposition parties *Lega Nord*, *Fratelli d'Italia* and the Five Star Movement monopolised the refugee debate with conspicuously polemic statements, calling for more restrictive action in granting protection to refugees, more numerous and faster deportations as well as greater support from the European partners and more equitable sharing of the burden.

There has been no fact-based and critical exchange between the opposition and the government. "The prefects should welcome the refugees in their own homes instead of 'giving' the locals, the mayors and the legal immigrants 'a hard time'", said Matteo Salvini, leader of *Lega Nord*.⁹ Statements such as this added further fuel to the public debate. The largest opposition party, the Five Star Movement, also made waves through extreme polemic slogans. The movement's leader, Beppe Grillo, wrote in his blog: "In all the countries of the world, illegal immigrants are deported: it's simply common sense."¹⁰ One can assume that in some sections of the population Grillo's statements fall on fertile ground: almost two million people follow him on Facebook and Twitter and several thousand read his blog every day.

8 | LiberoQuotidiano.it 2015: Mattarella: "Dal terrorismo i germi della terzaguerramondiale", *Libero Quotidiano*, 19 Aug 2015, in: <http://liberoquotidiano.it/news/politica/11820898/Mattarella--Dal-terrorismo-i.html> (accessed 15 Dec 2015).

9 | Askaneews 2015: Salvini: i prefetti lavorino, non rompano le palle a sindaci, *Askaneews*, 17 Jul 2015, in: http://askanews.it/politica/salvini-i-prefetti-lavorino-non-rompano-le-palle-a-sindaci_711562579.htm (accessed 15 Dec 2015).

10 | Grillo, Beppe 2015: Clandestino: segreto, occulto, di nascosto, *Blog di Beppe Grillo*, 22 Apr 2015, in: http://beppegrillo.it/2015/04/ clandestino_segreto_occulto_di_nascosto.html (accessed 15 Dec 2015).

The Italian political parties, which have taken a critical stance with respect to the refugee issue in recent months, have definitely found support among the population. The Five Star Movement, for example, has the support of 27.2 per cent of the electorate, while the percentage for *Lega Nord* is 14.1 (with the Prime Minister's *Partito Democratico* standing at 32.5 per cent and Forza Italia at 10.8 per cent.¹¹ No doubt, this popularity cannot be attributed and should not be reduced exclusively to the problematic refugee issue. But it has to be said that both parties have been able to attract a high level of support from the population over recent months.

The Vatican: Appeal for Humanity and Compassion

Since the beginning of his papacy, Pope Francis has repeatedly addressed the situation of refugees and called upon politicians and society to take action and to show greater compassion for the refugees; at times using blunt and highly critical language.

The Vatican and the Catholic Church have taken measures to help the refugees through numerous initiatives. In an appeal to Catholics, parishes and dioceses throughout Europe, the Vatican called for activities to draw attention to the refugees' dire situation on the next World Refugee Day, 17 January, under the motto: "Migrants and Refugees Challenge Us. The Response of the Gospel of Mercy." **Pope Francis repeatedly takes part in the public debate about refugees, at times using critical language.**

In mid-August 2015, the Secretary-General of the Italian Episcopal Conference, Nuncio Galantino, made a strikingly critical statement, condemning the Italian government in relation to its refugee policy. He said the Renzi government was "totally absent" and that the processes and the asylum procedures were inefficient. Galantino criticised the Italian legislation, which had no provision for "positive" integration but only for "non-integration" and was skewed towards the deportation of migrants. He was particularly scathing about the residency legislation and the length of the asylum process. He believes Italy could learn from German legislation in this context and emulate it.

11 | Ipsos 2015: Sondaggi Politici, la media all'11 Dicembre, Termometropolitico, 11 Dec 2015, in: http://termometropolitico.it/1195077_sondaggio-ipsos-di-martedi-italiani-favorevoli-alla-proposta-boeri.html (accessed 15 Dec 2015).

BELGIUM, LUXEMBOURG AND THE NETHERLANDS

*Dr. Stefan Gehrold** / *Tina Mercep*** (Finalisation: 30 Nov 2015)

According to a recent survey on Belgian television, seven out of ten Belgians think there are too many migrants in their home country. 76.8 per cent of the Belgian population are very concerned about the refugee issue. The tone of the current debate is hardening in the Benelux countries as well, not least against the backdrop of the Paris attacks and in view of the fact that the terror warning level in the Belgian capital has been raised to the highest possible level as a result.

Many of the refugees seeking registration in Belgium are still living in tents in front of the central port of call for this purpose, the Immigration Office in Brussels, some having waited for weeks for their situation to improve. Some 200 applications can be handled per day, and approximately 1,000 people are still waiting to be processed. Because the number of applications that can be accepted per day is limited, refugees are being asked to return another day.



#movingpeople: The art project is trying to draw attention to the situation of refugees with small figures in Amsterdam. | Source: Martin Broek, flickr ©📷.

* Head of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung's European Office in Brussels.

** Research Associate at the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung's European Office in Brussels.

Theo Francken, Secretary of State for Asylum and Immigration, says the situation is under control, although there is a set capacity that must not be exceeded. Most of the arrivals come from Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Eritrea and Somalia. The rush does not show any signs of abating in the near future, which means new reception facilities should be created as soon as possible. Since the beginning of the year, over 12,000 asylum applications have been submitted in Belgium. Now that Sweden has filed an application with the European Commission asking for measures to give it respite in connection with the distribution of refugees, Theo Francken would like to follow Sweden's example.

Demands for stricter border controls had already found strong support in Belgium several months ago. 74.3 per cent of Belgians, for instance, support stronger measures and stricter controls at their country's borders so that the refugee crisis can be managed more effectively. Secretary of State Francken had threatened the reintroduction of internal border controls in view of the inadequate controls at the external borders early on. After the Paris attacks (and the revelations about the terrorists' links to Belgium) he made good on his threat and there have been stricter border controls at the Belgian border crossings now for several weeks. In addition, there are plans to conduct stricter controls at the reception centers. According to the Minister of the Interior, Jan Jambon (*Nieuw-Vlaamse Alliantie*), all refugees should be required to carry special ID cards in future so that they can be identified at any time.

The issue is also currently the subject of extensive debate in social media. The numerous articles on the topic of migration on online news pages include both negative and positive comments. There is a lively public debate, not only in the political sphere and in the media but also in society at large. As the Belgian state is rather more restrained in its financial support for refugees compared to Germany – the weekly amount provided per adult living in a refugee center is just seven euros – the bighearted private initiative of many citizens needs to be emphasized. Radical opinions on the refugee issue on the Internet – at least on the portals of the country's large newspapers such as *La Libre* and *Le Soir* – do not go overboard. However, there have recently been numerous calls for a stronger monitoring of (radical) mosques. There have also been calls for better vetting of those travelling to the country. The tone of the discussions on the Facebook page of the Belgian offshoot of Pegida (*Patriotische*

As the Belgian state is rather restrained in its financial support for refugees the bighearted private initiative of many citizens needs to be emphasized.

Europäer gegen die Islamisierung des Abendlandes), which has acquired over 1,700 followers, had been one of moderation for a long time. But on 10 November 2014, the page turned into a closed Facebook group, which is not accessible to outsiders.

The other two Benelux states have not been immune to the refugee crisis either. Luxembourg's Prime Minister Xavier Bettel recently said the refugee issue could become one of the greatest challenges for Luxembourg's EU Council Presidency, which will come to an end on 31 December 2015. He argued for the rapid creation of a common European list of safe countries of origin. He complained that there were currently only national lists of countries of origin that were considered safe. Bettel further stressed that asylum applications must be processed more quickly and those not entitled to asylum must be deported without delay. At the beginning of November, Luxembourg was the first country to accept refugees as part of the redistribution process, receiving 30 people, who were flown to Luxembourg City from the Island of Lesbos. While this action received a great deal of media attention, it only represented a drop in the ocean considering current refugee numbers.

Like Belgium and the Netherlands, the Grand Duchy will promote the idea that asylum seekers should be housed increasingly in private accommodation, which will assist with their integration into society. According to an opinion poll in October 2015, 68 per cent of Luxembourgers support the politicians' stance. However, many doubt that the EU will be able to gain control over the migration crisis as a whole. A large proportion of respondents stated that it is important to take care of the refugees' basic needs. But integration and language courses should be offered at the same time to enable the refugees to communicate with the population and to quickly become independent. Many also think it is crucial to convey the country's values, its culture and its customs to the refugees.

The asylum policy in the neighbouring Netherlands is considered one of the strictest in Europe. Human rights campaigners complain that there are hardly any options for failed asylum seekers to remain in the country legally. The affected people have to leave the country within 28 days. The deadline can be extended to twelve weeks; but after that, the person is considered an "illegal". The Dutch government hopes to discourage migrants with this asylum policy. But by November 2015, over 45,000 people

had entered the country as asylum seekers already, compared to some 25,000 people in the whole of the previous year. As is the case in the neighbouring states, the largest single group (38 per cent) came from Syria. The Dutch Immigration Office is currently receiving between some 4,000 and 5,000 applications per month. King Willem Alexander believes the rising wave of refugees is heightening tensions within the EU. In a speech he gave in September, he advocated limiting the refugee numbers and a better distribution of the refugees across the EU. In addition to the high numbers, the heightened terror threat plays a large role on the domestic front. To be better able to fend off terror attacks, more funds should be made available for prevention.

The Authorities' Response to the Rising Refugee Numbers

In Belgium, the organisation "Flemish Refugee Action" calls upon the government to set up new initiatives to manage the rising refugee numbers and to help people to integrate into society. The organisation is further in favour of measures to establish the right conditions to encourage the housing of refugees in private households. According to "Flemish Refugee Action", increasing numbers of people are contacting the organisation and offering accommodation. At the same time, refugees should be distributed across communities on a pro rata basis. Should any community refuse to accept refugees voluntarily, a compulsory distribution plan would have to be imposed, according to the Minister of the Interior. Currently, one can still say the situation is under control, although tense. While numbers were still rising from one week to the next in September, a first reduction in numbers for a long time was in evidence in October, probably due to the colder temperatures and therefore more difficult travelling conditions for the refugees.

The Dutch government has set up a working group to address the refugee crisis. Prime Minister Mark Rutte does not want to commit himself to a maximum numerical limit for refugees and is calling for greater involvement by the countries of Central Europe in particular with respect to the acceptance of asylum seekers. At the same time, he welcomes the agreement by the EU member states to make available more funding for the refugee camps near the Syrian border. He further considers the securing of the external EU borders vital. The so-called hotspots for refugees, which were decided on at the extraordinary Leaders' Meeting on 25 October, should be set up as soon as possible.

Prime Minister Mark Rutte considers the securing of the external EU borders vital.

Following the lead of its Dutch neighbour, the government in Luxembourg also set up a working group to better handle the problems thrown up by the refugee crisis. According to Prime Minister Bettel, Luxembourg is willing to take on greater responsibility. It is important to him to avoid establishing ghettos and to integrate people instead, for example through job creation.

What Is the View of the Way Germany Is Handling Migration / Integration?

The Belgian media report extensively about the problems created by the migrations issue in Germany. While they initially reported intensively about the great compassion of the Germans, this soon gave way to questions about the limits of Germany's capacity to accept refugees as well as the domestic dispute about the matter. Reporting on the welcoming culture in Germany has been replaced by a focus on the debate about the problems of homing the refugees as well as the violence erupting in many accommodation facilities and the socio-religious conflicts between different groups of migrants, which the refugees have brought with them. Another topic receiving attention has been the search for human traffickers along the German-Belgium border. From January to July of this year, as many as 47 perpetrators were caught at this border. Ten more were apprehended at the Dutch border.

For weeks, attacks on refugees in Germany made the headlines in the Netherlands and in Luxembourg, with attention also paid to the problem of violence erupting in the refugee centers themselves.

Does a "Welcoming Culture" Exist in the Benelux Countries?

In Luxembourg, the private initiative "Refugees Welcome to Luxembourg" was set up in mid-August. Its Facebook page has acquired close to 9,000 followers to date. On this webpage, people put forward ideas and suggestions on ways to deal with refugees and on integration. It is also used to organise concrete help, assisting people with starting their new lives in the Grand Duchy via social media. A similar initiative, which enjoys even much greater support, exists in Belgium. Its Facebook page has some 29,000 followers. The civil society platform recently had to reject donations in kind, as the rush of volunteers was too large. At the end of September, a demonstration in the Belgian capital in support of refugees attracted some 20,000 participants.

SERBIA

Norbert Beckmann-Dierkes/Aleksandra Popović**/Evelyn Haefs****
(Finalisation: 7 Dec 2015)

In Serbia, the refugee issue attracted a great deal of attention in all the media from the onset. The issue is present in the print media as well as in television and radio programs, and particularly in social media there is a striking amount of solidarity with the refugees in evidence, and examples of concrete measures to provide aid and support demonstrate great empathy. From 7 to 16 December 2015, for instance, a number of Serbian artists came together to support the Heartfact Foundation (an organisation based in Belgrade, which was founded in 2009 and links people who defend human rights, liberty and social responsibility through a creative and artistic exchange) with organising a “WakEU! Festival”. During this event, the refugee issue was examined from different perspectives to further solidarity and humanity. The Serbian authorities are portrayed as handling the situation well, and there is an absence of the criticism of the activities of the authorities evident elsewhere.



At the Serbian-Hungarian border: Most refugees have the EU as a destination. Serbia is in this sense “only” a transit country. | Source: © Marko Djurica, Reuters.

* Head of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung’s office in Serbia.

** Project Manager at the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung’s office in Serbia.

*** Intern at the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung’s office in Serbia.

The political dimension of the wave of refugees is not only seen in relation to the current situation in the country but also under aspects of domestic and foreign policy. In addition to the frequently voiced desire for more concrete financial and material assistance from the EU, Serbia is currently advocating a more active engagement and cooperation by the region as a whole as well as by the individual nations, which should work together to set up an effective system.

The continuous political engagement of the European Union, from bilateral talks and visits to the recent summit meetings, has eclipsed the only major supporting measure taken by Russia in the summer, which received enormous media attention at the time.

Germany, with its Chancellor Merkel, is still mentioned in the media as the only reliable partner and represented as the most important destination country of many refugees. The benefits paid to asylum seekers in Germany are mentioned in the media on the odd occasion. There are more frequent reports, though, about the fact that Serbia is a safe country of origin.

Perception of the Issue among the Political Parties

Nenad Popovic, leader of the Serbian Progressive Party (*Srpska napredna partija*) advocates a fortified border to guard against an uncontrolled flow of migrants. Popovic, who has been a lecturer on international business at the Faculty of Economy at Moscow's *Lomonosov* University since 2000, maintains that all refugees are economic migrants. Boško Obradović, leader of the Dveri party, which is not represented in parliament, but does have a public presence, maintains that the refugee crisis represents a problem for Serbia and that the EU is at fault. He believes Serbia is underestimating the social, economic and health risks the flow of refugees poses. Against this backdrop, B. Obradović supports the construction of a border fence along the Macedonian-Serbian border modelled on the one at the Hungarian-Serbian border.

Apart from these exceptions, the country's political leadership sees the refugee crisis as an opportunity and adheres to the country's fundamental openness. Prime Minister Aleksandar Vučić stresses that Serbia will do everything in its power to ensure the refugees' safety. Now that conscription has been abolished, empty barracks are to be converted into reception centers. Where the refugee issue is concerned, Vučić expects that the EU will continue

to provide support and places particular faith in German Chancellor Angela Merkel. After the decision of some EU states to only accept refugees from the war zones in Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria in future, the states along the so-called Balkans route, Macedonia, Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia, have followed suit. The Serbian Minister of the Interior Nebojša Stefanović stresses that Serbia cannot shoulder the entire burden resulting from the crisis, which is why Serbia too will now primarily grant access to war refugees.

The Serbian Minister for European Integration Jadranka Joksimović has stated that Serbia's migration policy demonstrates to the EU that Serbia is a reliable partner that implements European standards. A fence along the border to Hungary would not solve the refugee problem. In a meeting with the Hungarian Foreign Minister, Peter Szijjártó, she stressed that these questions and potential problems could only be overcome with good and open bilateral relations. Foreign Minister Ivica Dačić has made it clear that Serbia would not follow the example of Hungary and build a fence along the border to Macedonia in order to prevent the arrival of further refugees.

Brankica Janković, Commissioner for the Protection of Equality in the Serbian government, has remarked on the conduct of the Serbian population and praised the tolerant and sympathetic treatment of refugees. She believes the reasons for this understanding lie in Serbia's past and the country's experiences with people being driven out and having to flee their homes.

Refugees' Reception in Serbia and the Route Taken

The population has a positive stance towards the refugees and is showing tolerance towards them. Hairdressers, for instance, are offering their services for free and fast food outlets are giving away food or charging lower prices. Food outlets have also adapted their range to Muslim religious rules and are offering more lamb products. Many services and offerings are now advertised in Arabic. Due to its own past, the Serbian population is demonstrating solidarity in its dealings with the refugees.

In Serbia, there is a great willingness to help the refugees, both among individuals and on the part of businesses and state institutions. Doctors are providing extra clinical hours, the post office has extended its opening hours at the money counters at Belgrade's

main railway station, many people and businesses are donating food, clothing, shoes, hygiene products and the like.

Considering the great challenge for the state organisations, some friction losses have become apparent in the coordination, but overall, the work done by the authorities is effective.

The state authorities responsible for dealing with refugees are the Serbian Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry for Labour, Employment and Social Policy as well as the Commissariat for Refugees. In addition, an information center for asylum seekers has been set up in Belgrade. Considering the great challenge for the state organisations, some friction losses have become apparent in the coordination, but overall, the work done by the authorities is effective. So far, the procedures organised by the Serbian authorities have been adequate under the circumstances. However, they are looking for further support from the international community. The Serbian Minister of the Interior has stressed that the costs to Serbia are very high and that there is a need for concrete assistance with temporary accommodation, food and medical supplies.

The immigration process generally runs in an orderly fashion. Supporting measures by Church aid organisations, the Red Cross, the United Nations, the EU and the USA as well as private initiatives are making a difference. NGOs have organised interpreters, who support the refugees. One example is Atina, an NGO based in Belgrade, which links the measures taken by local authorities to aid refugees with those conducted by state institutions so that refugees can be helped more effectively. Apart from this work, Atina has developed an additional support project involving a bakery producing bagels, the proceeds of which are used to further the integration of refugees and other persons in need of protection. Another organisation providing valuable help is the Belgrade Centre for Human Rights, which uses its legal expertise to draw up and propose necessary changes to legislation. Successful cooperation between state actors and NGOs as in this case is extremely valuable.

Most refugees are heading for the EU, and Serbia merely represents a transit country for a maximum of 72 hours. In this scenario, people's movements into and out of the country are handled as follows: The refugees arrive at the reception center in Preševo in the south of Serbia, where they are registered. Very few apply for asylum in Serbia. In Preševo, the refugees are given food, the opportunity to rest and information on how to proceed on their journey. The route no longer passes through Belgrade.

There are several buses and trains running every day, taking the refugees to Šid on the Serbian-Croatian border, from where they travel on through Croatia and Slovenia. The numbers of refugees arriving from Bulgaria do not figure much in the official reporting. All those involved in Serbia are aware of the fact that a resolution of the refugee crisis can only be brought about through joint international cooperation.

CROATIA AND SLOVENIA

*Dr. Michael Lange** (Finalisation: 27 Nov 2015)

After the German Chancellor had warned in early November that closing the German border to refugees could trigger armed conflicts in the states along the Balkans route, the governments of those states intensified their efforts to minimise such a risk, even though the Prime Ministers of both Croatia and Serbia rejected this hypothesis as too pessimistic.¹² That said, at least the member states of the Schengen Area, first and foremost Slovenia, began preparing for a potential restriction of the influx of refugees by the German and/or Austrian government by taking initial measures to secure their borders.¹³

Current Position in the Affected Countries

When Croatia was faced with mounting problems caused by the never-ending flow of migrants at the border post of Tovarnik, the Croatian and Serbian governments agreed to begin transporting the migrants from the Serbian border post of Sid directly to the newly opened Croatian reception camp in Slavonski Brod¹⁴ by train. This was a camp built on generous lines to accommodate up to 5,000 migrants, where they were to be registered and from where they were to be moved on to Slovenia. After the European Commission had made available 16.4 million euros of emergency

* Head of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung's office in Serbia.

12 | Jutarnji List 2015: Closure of Germany's Borders Could Cause "Armed Conflicts" in Balkans, Says Merkel, 3 Nov 2015, in: <http://tinyurl.com/ozeqeyo> (accessed 11 Dec 2015).

13 | Jutarnji List 2015: Slovenia to Fence Part of Croatian Border, but Cooperation Continues, Says PM Cerar, 10 Nov 2015, in: <http://tinyurl.com/qxo6exj> (accessed 11 Dec 2015).

14 | HRT 2015: Arrival of First Groups of Migrants Starts at Slavonski-Brod Reception Center, 3 Nov 2015, in: <http://tinyurl.com/omz3xuo> (accessed 11 Dec 2015).

funds at the request of the Croatian government to help master the refugee crisis at the beginning of November,¹⁵ the situation calmed somewhat, although the number of migrants who had entered Croatian territory by that time had already risen to 330,000.¹⁶ During the subsequent so-called Leaders' Meeting in Brussels, the Croatian government undertook to provide (temporary) accommodation for 2,000 of the total of 12,000 refugees to be distributed across the affected member states (Austria, Hungary, Slovenia and Croatia). Despite or perhaps owing to these measures to accelerate the "transit" of the migrants coming from Serbia through Croatian territory, the Slovenian parliament, working through the night, felt compelled to take "technical measures" at its border to Croatia, intended to limit the numbers of people crossing from Croatia illegally or to redirect the refugees to the official border crossings. Croatia responded with irritation and accused Slovenia of intending to thereby restrict the acceptance of migrants from Croatia. Although the measure was not put into action until the day after the elections in Croatia, and Slovenia promised that it would continue to process refugees arriving from Croatia by train, a dispute broke out about whether the barbed wire fences erected by Slovenia at the border crossings of Harmica and Gibina had been installed on the Croatian or the Slovenian side of the border.¹⁷ Croatia demanded the immediate dismantling of these border fences. It then sent an official letter of protest to the Slovenian government, and 50 members of the border police of each country stood across from one another along a section of the border for a long time in an atmosphere of hostility until the two Prime Ministers agreed on a joint approach during the refugee summit in La Valetta. However, at the meeting of the EU Ministers of the Interior, the Croatian government once again expressed outrage over the decision made there that no migrants should be returned to Greece and Hungary, where refugees were not being treated humanely. The Croatian side maintained that it was not right that Croatia should have to carry a heavier burden from a backlog of migrants because of its compassionate treatment of migrants, benefiting those two countries.

15 | Jutarnji List 2015: Croatia Gets EUR 16.4 Million of Emergency EC Funding for Migrant Crisis Management, 6 Nov 2015, in: Hina 2015: <http://tinyurl.com/p869el6> (accessed 11 Dec 2015).

16 | Hina 2015: Over 320,000 migrants pass through Croatia, 4 Nov 2015.

17 | HRT 2015: Slovenia's Constructing Razor Wire Fence on Croatian Border Raises Tensions, 11 Nov 2015, in: <http://tinyurl.com/ow2fncd> (accessed 11 Dec 2015).



Tovarnik, Croatia: Meanwhile, the situation in the country has somewhat eased. | Source: © Stoyan Nenov, Reuters.

Refugees as an Election Campaign Topic

When one considers that the refugee crisis reached a peak just when the election campaign in Croatia was heating up, it is no wonder that the Croatian government responded with extreme irritation to any measures (taken by neighbouring states) that could potentially worsen the situation on Croatian state territory in the short or medium term. The politicians were very much aware of the fact that the Croatian population, or the Croatian electorate, would bear in mind in its vote whether the social-democratic government would show itself capable of mastering the crisis. The issue of managing the refugee crisis had highlighted differences between the two large Croatian mainstream parties. The conservative *Hrvatska demokratska zajednica* (HDZ), in line with the Hungarian government, expressed its willingness to also deploy measures which were more resolute for securing the border, while the *Socijaldemokratska partija Hrvatske* (SDP), in line with the German government, vehemently rejected even the erection of border fences.¹⁸ The partly rather harsh responses by Croatian Prime Minister Milanovic (SDP), aimed at his counterparts Orbán and Cerar and the criticism by the latter with respect to the supposed lack of cooperation with his country, will probably have been

18 | Wölfl, Adelheid 2015: Große Lager liegen in Kroatien etwa gleichauf, Der Standard, 3 Nov 2015, in: <http://derstandard.at/2000024960460/Die-grossen-Lager-liegen-in-Kroatien-etwa-gleichauf> (accessed 11 Dec 2015).

beneficial to the Croatian Prime Minister in the election campaign because there is not only resentment against Serbia in Croatia but also against Slovenia, which derives from Slovenia's conduct during the EU accession process, from decades of an unresolved

The stance of the HDZ in favour of a more heavy-handed approach to prevent migrants crossing the border illegally may not have brought it the additional votes it had hoped for.

maritime border conflict, and most recently from the *Pirangate* scandal, reaching a new climax in the recent dispute about the way to deal with the influx of migrants. The stance of the HDZ, which advocates for a more heavy-handed approach to prevent migrants crossing the border illegally, may not have brought it the additional votes it had hoped for. While the SDP government had succeeded in routing the wave of migrants through the country, largely unnoticed by the electorate, its compassionate approach obviously struck a chord with at least those sections of the population that had had first-hand experience of being driven from their homes and having to flee during the Balkan War (1991 to 1995). In combination, these two circumstances, the "patriotic" argument between the top SDP candidate with the representatives from the neighbouring states and the compassionate conduct towards the refugees, which was reminiscent of people's own past suffering, may ultimately have contributed to the positive election result of the SDP electoral alliance, which few had thought possible.

Migration and the Risk of Terror

The realisation, gained soon after the terror attacks of Paris, that at least one of the two attackers had been registered in the Croatian reception camp of Opatovac back on 8 October, reignited the debate about the risks of the Croatian refugee policy. It was obvious that such news would no doubt unnerve not only the citizens of Croatia and Slovenia but all countries in which migrants were (temporarily) accommodated.¹⁹

Although Croatia's President as well as the responsible ministers assured the public immediately that the security situation was considered unchanged as Croatia was not a target country for terrorism, security measures were significantly strengthened.²⁰ Slovenia also demonstrated disquiet and saw itself confirmed in its

19 | HRT 2015: Milanovic and Ostojic Assure Croatia on High Security Alert; Paris Suspect was at Opatovac, 14 Nov 2015, in: <http://tinyurl.com/qf6kyun> (accessed 11 Dec 2015).

20 | Vecernnji List 2015: Croatia Not Immune to Terrorist Violence but Controls the Security Situation, 16 Nov 2015, in: <http://tinyurl.com/oxrk4ew> (accessed 11 Dec 2015).

more restrictive stance on border questions; but the government once more explicitly stressed the temporary nature of its measures for securing the border and denied reports that there were plans to close the borders totally completely.²¹

The Risk of Border Closures

In both countries, fears then mounted that the Schengen regime may break down altogether and Germany could begin to restrict the number of refugees admitted to the country. Against this backdrop, the Croatian Minister of the Interior Ostojic then stressed that if Germany were to close its border Croatia could not accept any more refugees.²² Similar opinions were also voiced in the neighbouring countries. Of course they were all keen to indicate that they did not want to be caught by surprise by such a decision and to find themselves unexpectedly having to cope with an unacceptably large number of migrants on their own territory. Everybody was aware that if Germany were to take such a decision, all other countries along the Balkans route would immediately close their borders and not allow any migrants to be returned to them.

The fact that this was not mere buster was confirmed a day later, when Croatia refused to let 162 migrants, whom the Slovenian government were not willing to accept, return onto Croatian territory. This "incident" was caused by the preceding decision by the Slovenian government only to accept refugees from war zones in future and not to let any other migrants enter and travel through the country. Seeing that there were by then a total of 420,000 migrants to be dealt with, Croatia no longer felt it could accept further risks, particularly as the influx of refugees showed no sign of slowing, and giving way in this matter would no longer affect the outcome of the Croatian election.²³ This was followed by an incident in Sarajevo, which did not attract much attention from the international press, where an assassin murdered two Bosnian soldiers and then took his own life. He is said to have been a follower of radical Islamists, who have been causing concerns among the security services in Bosnia and the surrounding region

21 | Zekic, Branimir 2015: Slovenia Denies Plans to Close Border, but Fence on Slovenian-Croatian Border Remains, HRT, 16 Nov 2015, in: <http://tinyurl.com/qfvfnfs> (accessed 11 Dec 2015).

22 | Jutarnji List 2015: Ostojic on Current and Future Issues of Migrants Transiting Croatia to Other EU States, 17 Nov 2015, in: <http://tinyurl.com/q9g555n> (accessed 11 Dec 2015).

23 | HRT 2015: Croatia to Refuse Entry of Migrants Not from War-affected Countries, 19 Nov 2015, in: <http://tinyurl.com/pu33dfw> (accessed 11 Dec 2015).

for months.²⁴ In view of the steps taken by the Croatian SDP caretaker government, it was not surprising that Karamarko, the leader of the former Croatian opposition, noted that he had advocated a more restrictive stance on the border question all along and that one definitely had to make sure to register or keep tabs on all migrants to prevent “terrorists melting away into the streams of refugees”. During an extraordinary meeting of the justice and interior ministers in Brussels on 20 November, the introduction of a “Passenger Name Record Directive” (PNR) was then adopted, the legislative implementation of which should reduce the risk of terror, although it will pose greater administrative challenges to the police authorities of the affected countries. While this new legislation is mainly aimed at states with an external Schengen border, Croatia feels it is affected as well as it is seeking membership of the Schengen Area.²⁵ Croatian MEPs have expressed displeasure at the stance and criticism the Croatian SDP government has displayed towards the policy of Hungary and later on also Slovenia, which was mainly aimed at fulfilling the contractual obligations of member states of the Schengen Agreement.

Rapprochement between the Presidents

Developments took another turn during a meeting of the Croatian and Slovenian representatives ahead of the *Brdo-Brijuni Process* summit in Zagreb initiated by the countries’ presidents, which began on 22 November and covered the refugee crisis among other topics. During the preparatory meeting between the two presidents Pahor and Grabar Kitarovic, it was agreed that the refugee crisis was not a bilateral but a European problem and that the influx of refugees could only be controlled or curbed by means of a joint agreement of all the states involved. They both wished above all for stricter controls at the Turkish-Greek border in view of the increasing terror risk, with greater emphasis on the distinction between war refugees and economic migrants. Referring to the conflicts at the Slovenian-Croatian border, the Croatian President expressed her hope that nobody would sustain serious injury because of the barbed wire fence there, which she hoped had only been erected as a temporary measure. The Slovenian President Pahor, for his part, replied that Slovenia was taking its

24 | Šprajc, Zoran 2015: Ostojić on BH Killings; Assures of “Highest Level of Readiness”, RTL Televizija, 19 Nov 2015, in: <http://tinyurl.com/ob6njw6> (accessed 11 Dec 2015).

25 | Matković, Damir 2015: EU Interior and Justice Ministers Agree to Systematic Controls of EU External Borders, HRT, 20 Nov 2015, in: <http://tinyurl.com/p39qzdr> (accessed 11 Dec 2015).

obligations under the Schengen Agreement seriously and could only control the border effectively if they could come to a mutually acceptable agreement on the number of refugees and the border crossing modalities.²⁶ The fact that it had not been possible to overcome all animosities between the two countries was demonstrated by the accusations by the Croatian government that the neighbouring country was violating important articles of the agreement in respect to the above-mentioned arbitration process to resolve the Piran border dispute between the two countries. How the interaction between Slovenia and Croatia with respect to the refugee issue will develop remains to be seen; trust between the two countries has been seriously damaged, and in the light of the never-ending streams of migrants, the apprehension is mounting day by day.

HUNGARY

*Frank Spengler** / *Bence Bauer*** (Finalisation: 25 Nov 2015)

Dramatic images of people fleeing across the Mediterranean dominated international media and therefore also the political debate in Europe for a long time. While Hungarian politicians had sounded the alarm bells in Brussels very early on and warned of an impending wave of refugees crossing the country's southern borders, the European Union did not react to the problems created by the refugees travelling along the Balkans route until much later. When the situation took a dramatic turn for the worse in 2015, the Hungarian government decided to take unilateral action in order to stem the massive influx of illegal immigrants. The so-called Balkan Corridor is used predominantly by Syrians, Afghans, Iraqis as well as Africans. According to figures from the Hungarian police, 391,115 people had crossed the country's borders illegally between January and 21 November 2015, roughly ten times the number of the previous year. Initially, the refugees arrived via Serbia and after the construction of the border fortifications via Croatia, with close to 10,000 people entering every day by the late summer of 2015. By mid-October

The so-called Balkan Corridor is used predominantly by Syrians, Afghans, Iraqis as well as Africans.

* Head of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung's office in Hungary.

** Project Manager at the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung's office in Hungary.

26 | Dnevnik 2015: Grabar-Kitarovic Meets Slovenian President Pahor in Ljubljana to Discuss Brdo-Brijuni, 21 Nov 2015, in: <http://tinyurl.com/qhduch6> (accessed 11 Dec 2015).

of this year, some 176,000 asylum applications had been submitted in Hungary. In over 80,000 cases, the process was halted after the applicants could no longer be traced. 2,140 applications were rejected, while a total of 344 applications were approved. Only approved asylum seekers can move freely in the Schengen Area, and the Hungarian security forces made consistent efforts to prevent migrants lacking legal travel documents from moving on to the best of their ability until the beginning of September. This earned the country praise from many political decision-makers, but there was precious little practical support for this contractually agreed approach. The migrants, on the other hand, reacted to having their progress blocked so close to their destination after their lengthy journey with total incomprehension and very little willingness to cooperate.



Hungarian border: Over the course of the summer, the Hungarian government has secured the country's southern border via erection of a fence. | Source: © Dado Ruvic, Reuters.

Refugee Issue in Hungary: Public Sphere and Politics

In Hungary, the topic of migration dominated media reporting outlets for several months. But the problems are predominantly perceived under the aspect of illegal immigration. The aspect of the integration of refugees did not play a great role in public perception as Hungary was mainly a transit and not a destination

country for the migrants. The government's consistent stance on the migration issue enjoys broad support among the population, and Hungarian society also displays a high level of compassion. The opposition parties demonstrate an ambivalent stance. The right-wing extremist *Jobbik* party is calling for even stricter action against illegal immigration and would like to see the country sealed off more effectively. The socialists used to direct their criticism less against government measures than against the manner of their implementation. The green *Lehet Más a Politika* (LMP) demands above all a stronger joint European approach.

As far back as the spring of 2015, the Hungarian government prepared the population for more forceful action against illegal immigration. In April, it initiated a "National Consultation" on the topic of migration and terrorism. Eight million questionnaires were sent to adult citizens, and approximately one million of these were returned by July. The idea was that future Hungarian policy should be informed by the results of this consultation. Most respondents agreed with the statement that the immigrants would threaten Hungarian jobs and that they should look after themselves. The majority also thought Brussels politics had failed and demanded stricter legislation in Hungary in this context. The international press described the questions as suggestive and criticised the survey heavily.

This snapshot of the mood among the population is confirmed by current opinion polls. According to a survey by the Századvég Foundation published in mid-November, 75 per cent of Hungarians support the strengthening of the border fortifications in the south of the country. 65 per cent disagree with a quota system for the distribution of refugees in Europe. The opinion of the Hungarian population is also shared by the majority of people in other Central European states. The countries see their membership of the Schengen Area as a major achievement of their accession to the EU that is linked to concrete consequences. The open Schengen borders are therefore not being put into question. The external Schengen borders (e.g. with Serbia) are a different matter. There is no question within the region that an inadequately secured external Schengen border will be detrimental to the freedom of movement within the EU in the long term. That is something everyone is keen to avoid at all cost.

In the early summer of 2015, the government consultation was complemented by a very controversial, large-scale poster campaign (“You must not take away jobs from Hungarians” or “You must respect our culture”). While these warnings were directed at human traffickers and refugees, they were worded in Hungarian and were not only put up near the country’s border. Many of the posters were overpainted or destroyed by people opposing the campaign, and “counter-posters” were put up later on. At the beginning of November, the government party *Fidesz* further began a campaign collecting signatures to protest against a potential EU quota system under the motto “Let us protect the country”, which was signed by as many as 750,000 people within just three weeks.

In mid-November 2015, the Hungarian National Assembly called upon the government by a majority decision to reject the quota system for the distribution of the refugees, which had been pushed through by the EU Ministers of the Interior with a qualified majority. Justice Minister László Trócsányi announced that Hungary would file an action against the ministers’ decision at the European Court of Justice in December, the reason being that the quota system violated the country’s sovereignty and had no legal legitimacy.

The question of migration to and integration into Germany is the subject of intense debate in the Hungarian media and among the public. Germany’s generous social benefits in conjunction with the lengthy legal process up to the potential deportation of failed asylum seekers are occasionally mentioned and criticised. The generous German social benefits exceed average Hungarian wages. They are seen as part of the cause of the wave of migration, even if this is not explicitly stated. Germany’s welcoming culture meets with incomprehension in Hungary. There is little in the way of a comparable fundamental stance towards the migrants present in Hungary. To the majority of the population, the massively increasing refugee numbers seem more threatening, which has been confirmed by the National Consultation and the surveys.

Securing the Hungarian Border in the South

As far back as mid-June, the Hungarian government announced that there were plans to build a 175 kilometer-long fence along the border to Serbia to curb illegal crossings. “We are also doing this for Germany”, said the influential *Fidesz* politician Gergely

Gulyás in a statement to *Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung* on 30 August 2015. Initially, the border was not hermetically sealed and guarded. But when the refugee numbers at the Hungarian-Serbian border, which was then only open at a railway crossing point, reached a new peak of nearly 10,000 people a day in mid-September, this gap was closed as well. Since then, people have only been able to submit asylum applications at the official border crossing points, in the so-called transit zones. After some violent scenes near Röszke near the Hungarian-Serbian border on 16 September 2015, the Balkans route changed direction towards Croatia virtually overnight. The Croatian security forces could not cope with the wave of refugees and took them to the Hungarian-Croatian border in buses and trains. From there, they were directed straight to the Austrian border. The Hungarian authorities decided not to register the refugees, maintaining that this should have already been done in Greece or Croatia. This situation did not change until the border fortifications at the Hungarian-Croatian border were completed as well on 17 October. While between 4,000 and 10,000 refugees arrived every day up to and including 16 October (reaching a peak on 23 September of 10,046 people), the number on the key date of 17 October was a mere 870, decreasing to just a few dozen a day thereafter.

These measures for securing the borders were complemented by an amendment to the penal code valid from 15 September, which made the illegal crossing of the border and damaging the border fence criminal acts. According to police statements, corresponding legal proceedings against 962 people had been initiated by 21 November. The efforts by the Hungarian government to prevent people from crossing the border illegally are supported by the Visegrád countries in a spirit of solidarity. Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovakia sent police personnel and supplied appropriate equipment. Hungary in turn supports Slovenia with security personnel and equipment for refugee accommodation. Macedonia has also been promised material support by Hungary. Since the November attacks in Paris, the Hungarian government has increasingly been drawing attention to the danger that is to be expected from the ongoing migration, entailing a rise in terrorism and criminality in Europe. Hungary's political leadership believes the recent events in France and Belgium are proof that it is justified in its rejection of immigration and in its warning of the emergence of parallel communities.

The efforts by the Hungarian government to prevent people crossing the border illegally are supported by the Visegrád Group in a spirit of solidarity.

A Question of European Identity

While the purpose of the construction of the border fortifications is first and foremost to retain law and order, the installations also have a symbolic impact that should not be underestimated. They are to signal that the government is willing and able to defend Hungary's sovereignty and the country's identity as well as security in Europe. Prime Minister Viktor Orbán has been drawing attention to the serious consequences of the impending wave of refugees for quite some time in numerous speeches and statements, thereby airing the topic in public. One of his statements drew criticism from the international media back in January 2015, when he made some comments on the occasion of the march to commemorate the victims of the Islamist terror attacks on members of the editorial team of the satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo* in Paris. On that occasion, he explained to Hungarian television that "economic migration is a bad thing" and called for immigration to be stopped. Hungary did not want to become a multicultural society, said the Prime Minister. He repeatedly asserted that it was not up to Hungary to pass judgment on the immigration policy of other countries with their multicultural societies. But Hungary had no intention of going down that road. In the summer of 2015 he explained that the migration was a threat to "Europe, the way of life of European citizens, European values". It was ultimately a question of whether the Europe we know would survive. "We want Europe to belong to the Europeans", said the Prime Minister. The statements made by Viktor Orbán draw attention to the Central European perspective on the migration issue. Not having had either a significant immigration experience, or a colonial history with related intercultural conflicts, the societies of Eastern and Central Europe have undergone different developments than those of the Western European states, which have been destination countries for migrants for decades. People in Central and Eastern Europe do not want to become destination countries and consequently multicultural societies, but retain their own culture and identity as much as possible.

BULGARIA

*Dr. Marco Arndt** / *Borislav Wankow*** (Finalisation: 27 Nov 2015)

For the first time in its recent history Bulgaria finds itself facing a flood of refugees as a result of the crisis in Syria and Iraq. This has been exacerbated by the fact that its border is also an EU external border, though Bulgaria is not yet part of the Schengen area. Since then the issue of migration has become a hot topic in the Bulgarian media and public debate.

Refugees and economic migrants are coming to Bulgaria – often illegally – particularly across the border with Turkey, but also to some extent across the Black Sea. Some remain in the country (generally unwillingly) as most of them seek to get to Western Europe, particularly Germany.



Pizza dinner: Even NGOs and private individuals are involved in caring for refugees; here a family from Syria. | Source: © Stoyan Nenov, Reuters.

Bulgaria is currently completing a 33-kilometer-long fence on the border with Turkey in order to prevent illegal immigration. But this fence is very controversial, both morally and legally; the EU Commission and UN have both spoken out in this respect. In November 2014 a group of some 100 representatives of German human rights organisations visited the site to protest the fence. Indeed, it

* Head of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung's office in Bulgaria.

** Research Associate at the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung's office in Bulgaria.

only protects a small section of the 273-kilometer border between Bulgaria and Turkey. 148 kilometers of this is a land border, while the remaining 125 kilometers consists of non-navigable rivers.

Over the last 25 years 500 to 3,000 refugees a year have sought asylum in Bulgaria. This figure soared in 2013 with 7,144 applications, and in 2014 the number of applicants exceeded 11,000. During the first ten months of 2015, 16,283 refugees have arrived in Bulgaria: 65 per cent are men, 25 per cent women and ten per cent children. Most asylum seekers come from Syria, followed by Iraq and Afghanistan. About half of these refugees are currently still living in reception centers, which are operating at around 50 per cent capacity.

On 15 October 2015 a tragedy occurred when a group of Afghan refugees were trying to illegally cross the Turkey-Bulgaria border. According to Bulgaria's Interior Ministry, they failed to follow the orders of Bulgarian border police. A police officer was forced to fire a warning shot, which resulted in a refugee being killed by a ricochet.

Over recent months the majority of refugees have been arriving via the "Balkan route" (Turkey-Greece-Macedonia-Serbia-Central European EU member states). According to media reports, refugees are taking this route and avoiding Bulgaria because it is much cheaper than making an illegal crossing of the Bulgarian border. In addition, the Dublin Regulation means refugees must register in Bulgaria, which makes it more difficult for them to move on to other, more attractive EU countries.

With reference to the ongoing talks on Bulgaria's accession to the Schengen area, Prime Minister Borissov stated that his country is investing heavily in protecting its external EU border. He believes the crisis can only be resolved in the long term if security zones are created in Syria and Turkey. He said he has made these proposals in writing to the leaders of all European institutions and the government heads of EU states.

Bulgaria's Interior Minister Rumiana Bachvarova said steps would be taken to handle the possibility of a flood of migrants, as has been the case in Macedonia. But she feels this is an unlikely scenario, because the Bulgarian borders are well guarded. Foreign Minister Daniel Mitov said the majority of refugees are in fact economic migrants, so they must be handled differently. According to

him, Bulgaria's borders are better guarded than those of Greece, so the risk for Bulgaria is lower.

The majority of political parties are trying to adopt a balanced approach towards the problem. Emil Radev, MEP for the largest of the ruling parties GERB (EPP) called on the EU Commission to develop a binding formula for the allocation of refugees within the EU on the basis of each country's GDP, economic development and levels of unemployment. The Reformist Bloc MEP Svetoslav Malinov suggested that Bulgaria should be mentioned in the same breath as Italy and Greece as countries that are currently subject to a huge amount of migration pressure. The government takes a similar view, but also believes countries such as Bulgaria that are subject to this kind of constant pressure should be given lower admission quotas than landlocked EU states. The socialist MEP Iliana Iotova has adopted a similar position.

The only party whose rhetoric is decidedly anti-refugee is the opposition nationalist Ataka party. It is calling for the border with Turkey to be closed, describes refugees as "Jihadists" and a "private Muslim army that is currently being trained in camps on the Turkey-Syria border" and warns against the "Islamisation" of Bulgaria.

How Germany is dealing with the issue of migration is a hot topic in the Bulgarian media. There have been reports about Germany's decision not to return Syrian refugees to the first country where they entered the EU. Chancellor Angela Merkel's words in this respect have been extensively quoted.

The Balkans and Bulgaria are ethnically diverse, so Bulgarians are used to co-existing with people from different ethnic groups and faiths. Politicians and analysts have often highlighted the Bulgarian people's traditional values of tolerance and hospitality. But the picture is more complex. Migrants from Europe, and particularly Western Europe, are considered desirable and made welcome. But this does not apply to migrants from other cultures, particularly Muslims. Some sections of the population have strong reservations. As a result of the Ottoman Empire, approximately twelve per cent of Bulgaria's population is Muslim (ethnic Turks), and it also has a large Roma minority, so it is not uncommon for people to fear being overrun by Muslim migrants.

Migrants from Europe, and particularly Western Europe, are considered desirable and made welcome. But this does not apply to migrants from other cultures, particularly Muslims.

In April 2015 *Pro Asyl* published a report on the refugee problem in Bulgaria. It strongly criticised the behaviour of the Bulgarian authorities and some sections of the population towards the refugees. It claimed refugees were being subjected to human rights violations, attacks, humiliation and abuse, particularly at the hands of officials. No doubt this is the case to some extent, but we cannot say this is a systematic or government-mandated practice.

RUSSIA

*Claudia Crawford** / *Dimitrie Weigel*** (Finalisation: 29 Nov 2015)

Public perception of the topic of migration as reflected in the media

The European refugee crisis has attracted a great deal of attention in the Russian media, not least because Russia has itself had to deal with large numbers of refugees in recent years, particularly from the Donbass region. The number of Ukrainian refugees over the last twelve months is estimated at one million,²⁷ although the numbers have been dwindling and are now probably closer to

Key media outlets with close ties to the Kremlin have accused the West of destabilising the Middle East and North Africa.

500,000. It is also expected that one million refugees will have arrived in Germany by the end of 2015.²⁸ At first glance, it might seem that the European Union and Russia are currently in similar situations and so could learn

from each other. However, the Russian media believe there are two significant differences between the refugee problem in the Russian Federation and the situation in the European Union. They think the biggest difference lies in the reasons why the refugees left home in the first place. Key media outlets with close ties to the Kremlin have accused the West of destabilising the Middle

* Head of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung's office in Moscow.

** Previous intern at the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung's office in Moscow and student at the University of the Federal Armed Forces in Munich.

27 | Diveeva, Julia 2015: Ukrainskij Krizis (The Ukraine Crisis), *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, 1 Jun 2015, in: <http://kp.ru/online/news/2071099> (accessed 23 Nov 2015).

28 | Interfax 2015: Minfin Germanii ozhidaet defitsita budzheta iz-za zatrat na bezhentsjev (German Ministry of Finance expects a budget deficit due to expenses on refugees), *Vedomosti*, 22 Oct 2015, in: <http://vedomosti.ru/economics/news/2015/10/22/613899-germanii-defitsita-byudzhetu-bezhentsjev> (accessed 25 Nov 2015).

East and North Africa.²⁹ Valentin Fedorov, Deputy Director of the Europe Institute of the Russian Academy of Sciences, has even suggested that the situation in Europe amounts to payback on the part of formerly oppressed peoples: "What we are seeing in Europe at the moment is effectively payback by the former colonies. They are now starting to cause problems for the developed countries. The West has brought this upon itself."³⁰ According to the country's public broadcaster, this is the price you pay for supporting regime change and intervention.³¹ In contrast, Russian media outlets with close ties to the Kremlin do not view Russia as the cause of the crisis in Ukraine, but rather as helpful neighbours who are willing to accept refugees from the Donbass Region out of a sense of solidarity.

The second significant difference is in the origins of the refugees. Russians and Ukrainians have much in common as a result of their history and their closeness in terms of religion, culture and language. This is why the integration of Ukrainians does not present a cultural problem. If there are problems, they are mostly of an economic nature and can be blamed on the currently restricted potential of the Russian economy. Russia has to deal with very few migrants from other countries. According to the head of the Federal Migration Service, Konstantin Romodanovsky, 2,000 Syrian refugees are currently seeking asylum in Russia.³²

Public perception of the wave of refugees heading for Europe as reflected in the media

The migration of refugees to the European Union is getting plenty of coverage in the Russian media. The main focus of much of the reporting is on the religious and cultural differences between the refugees and the European societies that are taking them in.

29 | Brajnin, Kirill 2015: V Evropu begut te, komu luchshuju dolu ustroili na rodine tsvetnymi revolyutsiyami i perevorotami (Those flee to Europe, on whom colored revolutions and changes of government bestowed a "better life" in their home countries), Pervij Kanal (Channel One Russia), 26 Apr 2015, in: <http://1tv.ru/news/world/282636> (accessed 25 Nov 2015).

30 | Baldina, Anna 2015: Istoricheskaya Mest byvshikh kolonij: Evropu razdelyayut Migranty (Historical revenge of the former colonies: Refugees divide Europe), Vesti, 19 Aug 2015, in: <http://vesti.ru/doc.html?id=2654362> (accessed 23 Nov 2015).

31 | Brajnin, n. 29.

32 | REGNUM 2015: Vremennoe ubezhische v Rossii poluchili okolo 2 tys. bezhentshev iz Sirii (About two thousand refugees received temporary asylum in Russia), REGNUM, 26 Nov 2015, in: <http://regnum.ru/news/society/2021076.html> (accessed 28 Nov 2015).

Russia Today suggested that the so-called Islamic State was threatening Europe with a million refugees, whose numbers include radical Islamists.

The resulting diversity is often portrayed in a negative light and media outlets with close ties to the Kremlin often try to put the idea in people's minds that there is a clear link between this new wave of migrants and the problem of Islamist terrorism.³³ In doing so, they are keen to point to the attack on *Charlie Hebdo* and the attacks in Paris on the night of 13 to 14 November 2015.³⁴ As early as February this year, Russia Today suggested that the so-called Islamic State (IS) was threatening Europe with a million refugees, whose numbers include radical Islamists.³⁵ Proponents of this view feel they have been proven right by the recent events in Paris. Some newspapers have suggested that right-wing parties are likely to gain in popularity as a result of the attacks.³⁶

In addition to the growing risk of Islamist terror attacks, which has resulted in heightened levels of security in France and Belgium in particular, Europeans also have to deal with financial difficulties and changes to their normal daily lives. According to the Russian paper *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, the Schengen Agreement, which guarantees freedom of movement throughout most of the European Union, could now be at risk.³⁷

After the attacks in Paris there was something of a shift in the tone of comments coming out of Russia, initially from President Putin himself, and then a day later from the media. The tragedy in Paris itself was greeted with a mixture of solidarity and compassion. In addition to offering its deepest sympathy, Russia also called for more cooperation in the fight against terrorism and for joint international efforts – something Russia had been suggesting for some time. The West should finally set aside its differences with Russia. Alexei Arbatov, one of the experts at the Carnegie

33 | Guschina, Anna 2015: Bryussel' I Berlin grozyat otmenit' Shengen (Brussels and Berlin threaten to abolish the Schengen area), *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 24 Aug 2015, in: http://www.ng.ru/world/2015-08-24/1_shengen.html (accessed 24 Nov 2015).

34 | Chernenko, Elena / Tikhonov, Dmitriy / Shevchenko, Kseniya / Pavlov, Aleksandr / Zhalin, Yuriy / Gorshkova, Anastasiya / Tarkhanov, Alexej / Zlotnokova, Daria 2015: Eto akt vojny (This is an act of war), *Kommersant*, 14 Nov 2015, in: <http://kommersant.ru/doc/2854642> (accessed 25 Nov 2015).

35 | Russia Today 2015: "Islamskoe Gosudarstvo" ugrozhaet navodnit' Evropu bezhentsami (Islamic State threatens to flood Europe with refugees), *Russia Today*, 20 Feb 2015, in: <http://russian.rt.com/article/75395> (accessed 24 Nov 2015).

36 | Cf. for example *Vedomosti* and *Kommersant* on 16 Nov.

37 | Guschina, n. 33.

Moscow Center, suggested that the attacks in Paris would result in relations between Russia and the West shifting towards greater mutual understanding and willingness to cooperate.³⁸ Russia has made it clear that it is interested in a joint approach to the problems in Syria and that it wants more cooperation in this area.³⁹ As a result of the Islamist attacks in Paris⁴⁰ and the downing⁴¹ of a Russian plane carrying predominantly Russian passengers flying from Egypt to Saint Petersburg, there has already been a significant increase in cooperation between the two countries over military activities in Syria. France has recognised that Islamist terrorism is a common threat and has therefore indicated its willingness to cooperate with Russia.⁴²

Russia has made it clear that it is interested in a joint approach to the problems in Syria and that it wants more cooperation in this area.

It is worth referencing a new survey conducted on the issue of combating terrorism by the well-known Levada Center, an independent polling and research organisation. In response to recent terrorist attacks, 44 per cent of Russians say they are in favour of intensifying the fight against IS, while 41 per cent want to see a tightening of immigration policies and 39 per cent favour a strengthening of special powers. 26 per cent would like to see more efforts to combat terrorism in cooperation with the USA and Europe, while 21 per cent are in favour of independent military operations, and 28 per cent believe Russia should focus its efforts on protecting its own people on Russian territory. Only 13 per cent were in favour of seeking a diplomatic solution.⁴³

38 | Ivanov, Maxim / Samokhina, Sofya / Safronov, Ivan 2015 : Zapadu napomnili ob obschej ugroze (The West was reminded of the common threat), Kommersant, 16 Nov 2015, in: <http://kommersant.ru/doc/2854932> (accessed 26 Nov 2015).

39 | Saltykov, Evgenij 2015: Rossiya predlagaet SSHA vmeste spasat' letchikov v Sirii (Russia proposes to the US to jointly save pilots in Syria), Vesti, 13 Oct 2015, in: <http://vesti.ru/doc.html?id=2675001> (accessed 25 Nov 2015).

40 | Chernenko et al., n. 34.

41 | RIA novosti 2015: MID RF: terakt na bortu A321, veroyatno, mest' IG za Siriyu (Russian Foreign Ministry: The attack on flight A321 was probably a revenge of ISIS for Syria), RIA novosti, 20 Nov 2015, in: <http://ria.ru/world/20151120/1324637412.html> (accessed 25 Nov 2015).

42 | Artemjev, Alexandr / Makarenko, Georgij 2015: Bol'shaya koalitsiya: udastsya li Rossii i Zapadu stat' sojuznikami v Sirii (Great Coalition: Can Russia and the West become allies in Syria?), RBK, 18 Nov 2015, in: <http://rbc.ru/politics/18/11/2015/564c49b89a7947fe0d9a34d7> (accessed 27 Nov 2015).

43 | Ivanov, Maxim 2015: Grazhdane za radikalnoe reshenie problem terrorizma (Citizens are for a radical solution of the terrorism problem), 26 Nov 2015, in: <http://kommersant.ru/doc/2862403> (accessed 26 Nov 2015) and in: <http://levada.ru/2015/11/26/grazhdane-za-radikalnoe-reshenie-problem-terrorizma> (accessed 30 Nov 2015).



Stavropol: While Russia accuses the West of being responsible for the European refugee crisis, it presents itself in Moscow as a helper to people fleeing the Donbass. | Source: © Eduard Korniyenko, Retors.

How political parties perceive the issue

The situation in Europe is attracting a great deal of attention from populist politicians in particular. Here too, the focus is on cultural differences, which are viewed as a problem. The leader of the right-wing populist LDPR, Vladimir Wolfovich Zhirinovskij, has talked of the collapse of Europe and says that Russia is ready to take in the French people and save them from being ruled by immigrants.⁴⁴ He suggested that if the European Union insisted on allocating refugees to countries on the basis of quotas, it would actually be exerting more control over its member states than was the case in the former Soviet Union.⁴⁵ However, in the wake of the Paris attacks most leading politicians see the risk of terrorism and the need to work with the West as a priority. Prime Minister Medvedev has spoken of the importance of this kind of cooperation and suggested that the country could pay a high price for attempting to go it alone.⁴⁶

44 | Chinkova, Elena 2015: Zhirinovskij predlozhit evakuirovat' vsekh korennikh frantsuzov v Rossiju (Zhirinovskij proposed to evacuate all French citizens to Russia), *Komsomol'skaya Pravda*, 14 Nov 2015, in: <http://kp.ru/daily/26458.7/3328405> (accessed 25 Nov 2015).

45 | Mix Media Group 2015: Zhirinovskij: Evrosojuz otdal Latviyu afrikantsam (Zhirinovskij: European Union gave Latvia to Africans), *Mix Media Group*, 9 Jun 2015, in: <http://www.mixnews.lv/ru/politics/news/2015-06-09/178005> (accessed 22 Nov 2015).

46 | RBK 2015: Medvedev obvinil Zapad v blizorukosti za nezhelanie sotrudnicat' s Rossiej (Medvedev accused the West for be unwilling to cooperate with Russia), *RBK*, 18 Nov 2015, in: <http://rbc.ru/rbcfreenews/564bcd169a7947ac48494253> (accessed 27 Nov 2015).

Perceptions of how Germany is handling migration and integration

Media with close ties to the Kremlin and those that take a more critical stance believe Germany is bearing the brunt of the migration crisis and is meeting with much opposition from East European countries, particularly on the issue of allocating refugees on the basis of quotas.⁴⁷ However, Germany is also seen as the key player, the one country that has, by seeking compromises, really taken the initiative on the issue,⁴⁸ and which therefore has the best chance of seeing an outcome that best reflects its own interests.⁴⁹

However, the media are also quick to point out that there are divisions within German society as a whole when it comes to the refugee question. The protests in Heidenau, which resulted in the use of tear gas, were seen as clear evidence of just how deep these divisions really are.⁵⁰

The *Echo of Moscow* radio station, which tends to be critical of the Kremlin, reported on the German Chancellor's visit to the scene of the protests in Heidenau, where she was booed and jeered by local people.⁵¹ On 17 October, Henriette Reker was attacked with a knife the day before she was elected Mayor of Cologne, which was seen as evidence of the insecurity felt by many sections of the population with regard to refugee policy.⁵²

47 | Baldina, n. 30.

48 | Dobrov, Dmitriy 2015: Germaniya: chto delat' s bezhentsami (Germany: what to do with refugees), INOSMI, 23 Aug 2015, in: http://inosmi.ru/op_ed/20150823/229806347.html (accessed 23 Nov 2015).

49 | RIA 2015: Merkel obeschala obsuzhdat' "chestnoe raspredelenie" bezhentsev v ES (Merkel promised to discuss a "fair distribution" of the refugees in the EU), RIA novosti, 27 Aug 2015, in: <http://ria.ru/world/20150827/1211358514.html> (accessed 23 Nov 2015).

50 | Kommersant 2015: V Germanii proizoshli stolkoveniya mezhd protivnikami priema immigrantov i poliziej (Clashes in Germany between adversaries of the refugee absorption/politics and the police), Kommersant, 22 Aug 2015, in: <http://kommersant.ru/doc/2794828> (accessed 24 Nov 2015).

51 | Echo Moskvy 2015: Kantslera Germanii Angela Merkel osvistali v lagere dlya bezhentsev v Hajdenau, gde proizoshli besporyadki (Chancellor Angela Merkel was hooted at at the refugee camp in Heidenau, where riots took place), Echo Moskvy, 26 Aug 2015, in: <http://echo.msk.ru/news/1610648-echo.html> (accessed 23 Nov 2015).

52 | Korostikov, Mikhail 2015: Burgomistrom Kyolna stala zhertva bor'by za prava bezhentsev (Victim of fight for refugee's rights became new Mayor in Cologne), 19 Oct 2015, in: <http://kommersant.ru/doc/2835604> (accessed 25 Nov 2015).

The Russian daily newspaper *Kommersant* suggested that Germany is now paying the price for a level of tolerance that is not necessarily shared in German society. This excessive tolerance is actually seen as a potential obstacle to integration into German society.

Berlin's Kreuzberg district is seen as a good example of the failure of integration and the development of a parallel society.⁵³ There has been a general increase in negative attitudes towards refugees within German society and these attitudes have started to become almost socially acceptable and no longer limited to marginal movements.⁵⁴ Some commentators point out that demographic change means that Germany actually needs more young workers, but state that the majority of refugees are only interested in getting financial support from the German state and are not prepared to conform to European standards of behaviour.⁵⁵ However the principle of inclusivity, which the German people were happy to embrace after the war, should ensure that the majority of people will still be prepared to accept the influx of more foreigners.⁵⁶

53 | Pankratov, Sergej 2015: Kuda bezhat' ot bezhentssev? (Where to flee from the refugees?), 24 Aug 2015, in: <http://kommersant.ru/doc/2790194> (accessed 24 Aug 2015).

54 | Ibid.

55 | Dobrov, n. 48.

56 | Korostikov, n. 52.