

POLITICKÉ VEDY / POLITICAL SCIENCES

Journal for Political Sciences, Modern History, International Relations, security studies / Časopis pre politológiu, najnovšie dejiny, medzinárodné vzťahy, bezpečnostné štúdiá

URL of the journal / URL časopisu: <http://www.politickevedy.fpvmv.umb.sk>

Author(s) / Autor(i): Ivan Legrády
Article / Článok: Scientific Debate: “Migration Policies of V4 and France: What Are the Convergences and Divergences?” / Vedecká debata: „Migračné politiky krajín V4 a Francúzska: Aké sú konvergencie a rozdiely?“
Publisher / Vydavateľ: Faculty of Political Sciences and International Relations – MBU Banská Bystrica / Fakulta politických vied a medzinárodných vzťahov – UMB Banská Bystrica
DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.24040/politickevedy.2018.21.2.191-196>

Recommended form for quotation of the article / Odporúčaná forma citácie článku:

LEGRÁDY, I. 2018. Scientific Debate: “Migration Policies of V4 and France: What Are the Convergences and Divergences?”. In *Politické vedy*. [online]. Vol. 21, No. 2, 2018. ISSN 1335 – 2741, pp. 191-196. Available at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.24040/politickevedy.2018.21.2.191-196>

By submitting their contribution the author(s) agreed with the publication of the article on the online page of the journal. The publisher was given the author’s / authors’ permission to publish and distribute the contribution both in printed and online form. Regarding the interest to publish the article or its part in online or printed form, please contact the editorial board of the journal: politicke.vedy@umb.sk.

Poskytnutím svojho príspevku autor(i) súhlasil(i) so zverejnením článku na internetovej stránke časopisu *Politické vedy*. Vydavateľ získal súhlas autora / autorov s publikovaním a distribúciou príspevku v tlačenej i online verzii. V prípade záujmu publikovať článok alebo jeho časť v online i tlačenej podobe, kontaktujte redakčnú radu časopisu: politicke.vedy@umb.sk.

SCIENTIFIC DEBATE: “MIGRATION POLICIES OF V4 AND FRANCE: WHAT ARE THE CONVERGENCES AND DIVERGENCES?”

Ivan Legrády*

The debate on the migration policies of the countries of the Visegrád 4 and France was held on the 12th of January 2018 in the Court Hall of the Faculty of Law of the Comenius University in Bratislava. The main organisers of this event were the National Association of Young Auditors of the French National Defence Institute (*ANAJ-IHEDN*) and Slovak civil association *Esprit de Défense*. The event was organised in partnership with the French Embassy in the Slovak republic, French Institute, Faculty of Law of the Comenius University and Institute of Strategic Policies – STRATPOL.

This specific debate was launched as the very first event in a series of debates and conferences set up in a new project that focuses primarily on the strengthening of the Franco-Slovak dialogue on the security and defence issues. This effort is highly relevant, seeing numerous initiatives at the European level mainly in this area, such as new ambitious defence projects under the framework of PESCO¹, rising cooperation and support in CSDP² missions and operations under EU direction but also those regarding the protection of EU external borders and migration management. Franco-Slovak cooperation in many of these fields is still underdeveloped and is far away from reaching its full potential. This partially results from some divergent strategic priorities but also due to a genuine lack of understanding and comprehension of one another - as states, as regions and as a people. By creating and encouraging such events and activities, this project seeks to not only debate

* Mgr. Ivan Legrády, LL.M. is the president of *Esprit de Défense*, a civil association under Slovak law and member of Committee on European Security of the French public think tank ANAJ-IHEDN, Case 41, 1 Place Joffre, 75700 Paris SP 07, France, e-mail: legrody.ivan@gmail.com.

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.24040/politickevedy.2018.21.2.191-196>

¹ Permanent Structured Cooperation on Defence formally established on 11 December 2017 by the decision of the Council of the European Union

² Common Security and Defence Policy of the European Union

relevant European security issues and exchange experiences and ideas, but also to satisfy the need for, symbolically speaking, rediscovery of one another during this complicated and challenging times, where the effective cooperation of European states is more than required.

We understand that it is quite important to comprehend the cultural, historical and other regional factors involved, for they play a big role in the perception of threats and security decision-making and shape the opinion of the population as well. By understanding better the underlying causes of what is called in France „*la pensée stratégique*“ - or strategic thinking - of France and of our region, the benefit for all should crystallise in better anticipation of our partners' actions and higher trust therein, which in turn could lead to more effective cooperation and more coherent actions at the European and global level.

As a secondary objective, this project aims to bring issues regarding European security closer to the public eye and rejuvenate the public debate. Last but not least, it was deemed essential to cooperate with various francophone Slovak universities and associations to let our students deepen their knowledge and discover more about French institutions, initiatives and even job opportunities to strengthen our bilateral relations in the fields of science, research, education and culture.

The January debate's topic focused mainly on the convergences and differences in French and Slovak migratory policies and their own distinctive perception of migration in the light of already mentioned specific thinking. This issue is one of the more important ones as in the last couple of years we saw an unprecedented movement of people towards Europe, which has in turn posed a challenge to the security of Europe's borders and to the cohesion of the Union in every sense of the word. With the number of migrants and refugees relatively stable, there is now a temporary sense of relief at the EU political level. This opportunity is already being exploited to discuss new rules and reforms within the EU, but also to develop better and more effective cooperation between member states for the near future.

The debate thus focused on the current situation in our countries, common grounds and objectives of the French and Slovak migration policies, as well as on how our states are positioning themselves in the current discussions regarding reforms of the Common European Asylum System. The debate also sought to clarify our respective positions and perspectives and the underlying causes of past disagreements between the Eastern and Western EU member

states, which play an essential role in the security perceptions, threat evaluation and foreign policy orientation of the decision-makers and population alike. For this purpose, we have gathered a number of experts and academics from various French and Slovak Ministries, agencies, universities³ and from the European Commission.⁴

First round table was introduced by a presentation of the French perspective to the audience, which was concurrently illustrated by some numbers. Migration has purportedly decreased in France since 1975. Approximately 120,000 people a year immigrate in France, which is a relatively low figure in the OECD. The three main reasons for migration are Family (\approx 20,000 people), Studies (\approx 60,000 / 70,000 people) and Humanitarian causes (\approx 30,000 people). There is therefore not a lot of migration related to work from outside of the European Union. On the sources of migration to France, it was said that approximately 80% of all migrants come from Africa from which the Maghreb region represents roughly 50%. In what concerns French perception of this phenomenon, there is a big difference between the French perception and the number of migrants' applications. To better illustrate the recent changes caused by the migration waves, it was suggested that public in France mixes the ideas of migration and terrorism since the 13th November of 2015 (Bataclan shooting).

A basic introduction was also made from the Slovak perspective, namely its experience with migration after the Second World War (closed borders apart from mainly economic migrants from "friendly countries" - other Soviet republics, Cuba and especially Vietnam). After Schengen and the enlargement of the EU in 2004 and 2007, the nature of migration changed. The country is currently trying to stop the "brain drain" which, when put into practice, means that approximately 30,000 students are studying in other EU countries, mostly in the Czech Republic. We could hear from the participants that Slovakia has already had good practices regarding migration, e.g. legal services which are free of charge to migrants, and that the country also has relatively good prospects - moving from a transit country to a destination one.

Then came the migration crisis of 2014-2015, where Hungary was the most affected country of the region. Some revealing figures showed the impact of the

³ University of Matej Bel, Banská Bystrica and Sciences Po, Paris

⁴ NB: because the debate was held under the Chatham House Rule, which means that no comments may be attributed to specific individuals, this report has been compiled and is released in accordance with it by organising these individual statements under "positions" of France, Slovakia and the European Commission.

crisis. When Slovakia joined the EU, 11,000 people applied to enter the country. In 2015, Slovakia received 250,000 applications. In the last few years, the majority of Slovaks purportedly believed that the main issue in their country is immigration. However, immigrants to Slovakia are nowadays still coming mostly from the surrounding countries. To illustrate the dialectic between current situation and possible future developments, it was said that in 2060, only around half of active persons in Slovakia will be working and the other half will be retired. To make matters even more serious, it was predicted that in 2080 the Slovak population would have decreased to 5 million people, so the country will probably be in need of migrants.

Regarding integration, it was said that legal migrants to Slovakia are coming from surrounding countries or the EU, so there is no real need for integration. Regarding the refugees, the first integration program dates back to 1993, while a new one is currently being set up and will be reviewed in 2018. One of the main challenges mentioned for Slovakia was their housing.

The participants agreed that from the European perspective, the EU as a whole faces many challenges regarding immigration. In 2015, one million illegal immigrants arrived in the EU; approximately 800,000 came through Greece and the rest through Italy. The first challenge was to manage the migration flow. Considering the fact that the population of the EU is about 560 million people, the ratio does not seem dramatic. However, this represented approximately 5,000 to 7,000 newcomers a day to process, which was not an easy task. As a result, in 2015 only 58% of migrants were fingerprinted before entering the EU, whereas in 2017, as much as 99,6% were fingerprinted.⁵

Lampedusa was a “wake-up call” for the EU and the priorities shifted. Managing the migration flow remains a big challenge. Other challenges were to save lives and support the frontline (creation of “hot spots”), tackle the EU structural issues (have a global and comprehensive approach, better coordination and reform the EU policies); manage the returns (36% return rate) and provide legal pathways for migrants.

After the coffee break, the second round table continued in the spirit of the first and transitioned into some policy recommendations. One of the questions which were raised concerned the short and middle term policy solutions by the states and their ideal outcome. Some of the participants stated that the harmonisation of our living conditions in the EU and the harmonisation of the

⁵ NB: children under 14 are not fingerprinted, this is why the figure does not reach 100%

national policies would help. Also, having united European policy and European approach of the subject as well as strengthening our intelligence cooperation should be desired and realised – the sooner, the better.⁶

From the French perspective, France should continue focusing on three priorities and/or challenges – integration, tackling of illegal migration and higher attractiveness to students and qualified workers. France needs to build a sustainable system to welcome migrants and be able to answer their questions, fight against poverty and have a better integration system (education, cultural aid...). France can also strengthen its integration policy by improving its job market, via schooling, by setting up special services to help migrants in their day-to-day affairs and by developing language courses.

The participants agreed that at the EU level there is a need to find a balance between responsibility and solidarity, which has been an important issue of contention between Western and Eastern EU member countries, the latter preferring the approach of “effective solidarity” rather than that of “unconditional solidarity”. The member countries also need to help secure our common external border, screen the persons who are coming across and help the countries that are at the external border.

At the end of the debate, the participants discussed the tools the EU and its members can use. They concluded that they have to engage a positive narrative about migration, coming from the EU leaders. On this matter, however, the European Commission cannot have a positive united narrative, so the local communities must also tackle this issue. Taking into account somewhat divergent perception of this phenomenon by member states formed by different historical and cultural experiences and environment, it is necessary to maintain dialogue and try to find compromises to avoid further involvement of emotional elements, which can then be exploited politically, including during electoral campaigns.

Secondly, successful integration was deemed one of the best tools and responses regarding challenges connected to immigration. However, the majority of participants agreed that the answers and solutions working in one country would not necessarily work elsewhere. Every country must thus find its own integration policy according to its needs and its cultural standards while

⁶ The EU still faces a lot of problems regarding this issue, mostly the difference of standards (28 different systems) and the transition of responsibility (where migrants arrive or have asked for an asylum) because asylum seekers can move freely in the EU.

taking into account the broader European realities as well. The EU must also offer a platform on which people can share their experiences of integration. Finally, it was deemed necessary to engage a discussion between the migrants and the citizens of the country to avoid sometimes-negative emotional responses and take part in a rational discussion.

To conclude, all participants welcomed this opportunity to talk about this issue in the light of Franco-Slovak dialogue and expressed hope that similar events will be organised in future. Such an issue like migration and challenges it presents, in addition to talking about common grounds and differences in the respective strategic interests of our regions cannot be deeply analysed and discussed in one sitting, so there was much left to discuss. The event closed with final remarks where it was announced that for the next event the debate should cover other hot topics concerning security issues like cyber security and cyber defence or CSDP and new PESCO initiative and its projects.