

NEW PROPOSITIONS IN THE AREA OF THE EUROPEAN MIGRATION POLICY FROM THE POLISH PERSPECTIVE

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Very difficult situation with immigrants from African countries forced the European Commission to reform the EU's migration policy. Member states with the largest inflows of immigrants applying for asylum are not able to deal with this extraordinary situation and bear the cost of necessary assistance.

European Commissions' propositions are aimed to balance solidarity and responsibility between all the EU member states of helping asylum seekers, excluding those one which do not participate fully in the implementation of the Schengen acquis. This will be completely new situation to some member states, like Poland, which have not had previous experience with asylum seekers and labor migration on such a larger scale.

Polish society is very heterogeneous and is not prepared to implement the EC's program on migration. The polls show that about 70% of Poles are against accepting even small groups of emigrants from Syria (Christians), even if it is said that only about 60 families would come to Poland. So it will be even more complicated to accept coming of few thousands immigrants foreseen in the European Commission's proposal.

First of all, Poles are a closed society because of the low percent of foreigners and minorities living in Poland. After the second World War "the Big Three" decided about new Polish borders and resettlements of many European nations on the large scale in this part of Europe. This resulted in closing Polish society from other nations what was enhanced by the policy of the communist state which highly restricted, on the one hand the possibility to leave Poland and on the other hand the arrivals of foreigners were as well highly scrutinized by the communist authorities.

The second reason is connected with growing nationalism in Poland. In recent years we may observe especially among young people supporting right-wing movements whose main idea is driven by building "Poland for Poles", decreasing influences of foreign transnational companies, rejecting the European integration and upbringing young Poles in the spirit of patriotism (really meaning – nationalism). What has to be stressed is the specific understanding of "nationalism" in this part of Europe as some kind of fear of strangers/foreigners. So it is not concentrated on constructing a positive attitude among members of the nation by it is aimed at stressing the possible expansion by neighbor nation on our territory.

The third reason of aversion to immigrants/asylum seekers is related to Polish economic situation. Even if during the economic crisis Polish economy experienced a significant growth comparing to others EU's member states is widely believed that the standard of living of ordinary people have not raised. Once again this vision is very strongly shared by the youngest part of Polish society. Students know that after graduating if they will get any job it would be underpaid and only on temporary contracts without no perspective on getting better position and salary, so without chance to establish own family. This wisdom is very common because their older friends have get stuck in that kind of situation in Poland or emigrated to wealthier EUs' member states or the EFTA states. So on the one hand there is a fear that foreigners will take their jobs (even if mostly is unreal fear), and on the other hand in the Polish society in strong conviction, that if Polish state is not able to secure Poles social demands there is no place for financial support to people migrating to Poland.

The fourth main reason is strongly connected with the countries of origin from which migrants come to Europe. From the perspective of the Polish society anyone migrating from North Africa is a Muslim. Because of, on the one hand high rate of Catholics in Poland and on the other hand awareness and knowledge about the problems arising from the presence of a large number of Muslims in Western Europe, Poles do not want to repeat similar political and economic problems in Poland. There is strong believe among Polish society that proposition presented by the European Commission is the first step to bring this problem in the Poland's territory.

Many mistakes were made by the Polish government in recent years. The pro – European majority supporting Polish government has not been able to start a necessary discussion on migration policy. Since 2004 when some of the member states opened labor markets for citizens from "the new" member states it is estimated that about 2 million citizens have left Poland. The fertility rate is very low about only 1.3, so in next decades Polish society is going to shrink. Taking those two factors together there is a great need for reasonable and effective migration policy. But not the Polish elites either the society is really aware of this challenge.

Polish society sees our membership in the EU as a some kind of recompense for the suffering during the II World War and communist domination in Poland and the other Central and Eastern European countries. The support for the European Union in Poland is very high, but it is mostly based on inflows of European funds and the possibility to move and live in the "old" rich member states. So the acceptance for the EU is not founded on the promotion of the integration idea but is based on purely mercantile considerations.

Lot of Poles do not remember or are not aware of the assistance made by Western Europe during 80's in XX century when many Polish citizens had to emigrate from the political reasons and asked for asylum in democratic countries. Polish society understands "solidarity" in the European Union one-sidedly, as different forms of contributions made by the "old" members states for Poland.

During just completed presidential campaign the migration topic has been raised only few times. Mostly the idea was criticized especially by the right – wing candidates. But this topic may be a "hot" issue in upcoming parliamentary elections which will result in forming a new government. Even now one of the new political leaders – rock musician Paweł Kukiz – said that the idea of bringing immigrants from Africa is maybe aimed at making destruction of Polish nation and to set up in Polish territory multicultural society which will be easy to manipulate.

Because of the crisis in Ukraine, Poland has expected flows of asylum seekers from this country, so it was said that the government is ready to prepared about 20.000 place in special center for temporary residence. But in the reality Polish state has only about 2.000 such places in his disposition. Additionally the administration is not prepared to work with so many people from Africa, because till now it has had contact with migration from former USSR countries and sometimes only with small numbers of people coming from East Asia. Even if the governments declaration are saying something different, that Poland is ready to accept few thousands asylum seekers, it is not the truth.

These all determinants make the position of the Polish government very skeptical in relation to the proposals submitted by the European Commission on migration policy reforms and application specific solutions in urgent cases. The government is aware of the delicacy of the issue of immigrants from Africa in Polish society, while knowing also the low capabilities of the Polish administration to provide real help to people from this continent. The Polish government has limited influence on the final decision which will be made by the EU institutions. But because of binding character of this act, it will have to implement it.