Krzysztof Białobłocki

POLITICAL PERCEPTION OF IMMIGRATION PROCESSES IN THE COUNTRIES OF THE VISEGRAD GROUP

The article is dedicated to analyzing and systematization of political perception of immigration processes in the countries of the Visegrad group. It is argued that the positions of parties and voters regarding immigration in the countries of the Visegrad group are essentially ideologically structured. The author found that the region enjoys different approaches to understanding national issues and immigration processes, but traditionally revolves around the nationalist, liberal, exceptional, national-conservative approaches and rhetoric of the "greater nation" approach. It is motivated that the immigration problem in the countries of the region depends on the conceptualization of party approaches to nationalism and related/contextual issues. In general, it is noted that the political perception of the problems of immigration processes in the countries of the region is nationally (i.e. in each country) and regionally (i.e. in the region in general) determined and oriented, and the political process is much radicalized and activated, in particular by anti-immigrant and (as an accommodation) mainstream parties.

Keywords: immigration, party, political perception, nationalism, Visegrad group.

ПОЛІТИЧНЕ СПРИЙНЯТТЯ ІММІГРАЦІЙНИХ ПРОЦЕСІВ У КРАЇНАХ ВИШЕГРАДСЬКОЇ ГРУПИ

Проаналізовано та систематизовано специфіку політичного сприйняття імміграційних процесів у країнах Вишеградської групи. Аргументовано, що позиції партій і виборців щодо імміграції у країнах Вишеградської групи істотно ідеологічно структуровані. Відтак виявлено, що регіон користується різними підходами до розуміння національної проблематики й імміграційних процесів, а усереднено обертається довкола націоналістичного, ліберального, виняткового і національ-консервативного підходів та риторики підходу «великої нації». Вмотивовано, що імміграційна проблематика в країнах регіону залежить від концептуалізації підходів партій до націоналізму і суміжних/контекстних з ним питань. Загалом помічено, що політичне сприйняття проблематики імміграційних процесів у країнах регіону національно (тобто у кожній державі) та регіонально (тобто в регіоні загалом) детерміноване й орієнтоване, а політичний процес значно радикалізований та активізований, зокрема антиіммігрантськими і (як акомодаційна реакція) основними партіями.

Ключові слова: *імміграція, партія, політичне сприйняття, націоналізм, Вишеградська група.*

Immigration processes in the countries of the Visegrad group, especially over the last decade, are quite differently perceived politically and against this background have different consequences. Thus, their comparison and systematization make an effective instrument for comparing immigration process in the region, in particular aiming at working out certain recommendations. It is of great topicality in the context that some countries of the Visegrad group currently and traditionally are positioned as emigrant, some as immigrant and others as constantly changing, what automatically marks the way political forces, political elites and public articulate their position as to immigration process, as well as referring to elaboration of immigration policy in each individual country of the Visegrad group.

The abovementioned range of problems has been specifically and indirectly studied in the works by the following researchers: S. Allievi[1], J. Androvilov[2], L. Billy[3], H. Bojar[4], A. Buonfino[5], J. Filadelfiova[6], Á. Hárs[7], K. Hodor and A. Kosinska[8], R. Hokovsky and J. Janda[9], J. Husák, O. Schütz and M. Vít[10], T. Kolar[11], T. Kusnirakova and P. Cizinsky[12], M. Meciar[13], J. Rovny[14], S. Schneider[15],

[1]   Allievi S., How The Immigrant Has Become Muslim: Public Debates on Islam in Europe, „*Revue Européenne des Migrations Internationales*" 2005, vol 21, nr. 2, s. 135–163.

[2]   Androvilov J., Immigration in Current Political Discourse – The Case of Slovakia within the European Union, „*Annual of Language and Politics and Politics of Identity*" 2013, vol 7, s. 5–22.

[3]   Billy L., *Immigration issues in Slovak politics*, Wyd. Univerzita Palackého v Olomouci 2012.

[4]   Bojar H., To Be an Immigrant in Poland An Analysis of the Experiences of Immigrants from Non-EU Countries, „*Polish Social Review*" 2007, vol 160, s. 401–403.

[5]   Buonfino A., Between Unity and Plurality: The Politicization and Securitization of the Discourse of Immigration in Europe, „*New Political Science*" 2004, vol 26, nr. 1, s. 23–48.

[6]   Filadelfiova J., *Sondy do kulturnej diverzity na Slovensku*, Wyd. IVO 2010.

[7]   Hárs Á., Balogi A., Bernát A., Feischmidt M., Kováts A., Nyíri P., Péteri G., Zakariás I., Immigration countries in Central and Eastern Europe: The Case of Hungary, „*IDEA Working Paper*" 2009, vol 12, źródło: http://www.idea6fp.uw.edu.pl/pliki/WP12_Hungary.pdf

[8]   Hodor K., Kosinska A., Polish Perceptions on the Immigration Influx: a Critical Analysis, „*University of Bologna Law Review*" 2016, vol 1, nr. 2, s. 242–270.

[9]   Hokovsky R., Janda J., *Immigration and Integration of Minorities in View of Czech Political Parties*, [w:] Hokovsky R., Kopal J. (eds.), *Politics and Policies of Integration in Austria, Hungary, Czechia, Denmark and at the EU Level*, Wyd. League of Human Rights & European Values Think-Tank 2013.

[10] Husák J., Schütz O., Vít M., National Identity of the Political Parties in the Visegrad Region, „*L'Europe en Formation*" 2012, vol 2, nr. 365, s. 265–287.

[11] Kolar T., *The Migration Crisis and the Rise of Right-wing Extremism and Euroscepti*cism, Paper on the occasion of the international conference „Migration's Influence on Euroscepticism and Political Radicalism", May 27, 2016.

[12] Kusnirakova T., Cizinsky P., Dvacet let ceske migracni politiky: liberalni, restriktivni, anebo jeste jina?, „*Geografie*" 2011, vol 116, nr. 4, s. 497–517.

[13] Meciar M., *Immigrant Identity, Social Adaptation and Post-Secular Society in Europe*, [w:] Leman J., Sezgin I., Toguslu E. (eds.), *New Multicultural Identities in Europe: Religion and Ethnicity in Secular Societies*, Wyd. Leuven University Press 2014, s. 73–93.; Meciar M., Immigration Discourses in the Czech Republic from the Perspective of the Current Refugee Crisis, *"Beykent Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi"* 2016., vol 9, nr. 1, s. 148–161.

[14] Rovny J., Communism, Federalism, and Ethnic Minorities: Explaining Party Competition Patterns in Eastern Europe, „*World Politics*" 2014, vol 66, nr. 4, s. 669–708.; Rovny J., The Other "other": Party Responses to Immigration in Eastern Europe, „*Comparative European Politics*" 2014, vol 12, nr. 6, s. 637–662.

[15] Schneider S., Anti-Immigrant Attitudes in Europe: Outgroup Size and Perceived Ethnic Threat, „*European Sociological Review*" 2008, vol 24, nr. 1, s. 53–67.

U. Sjöberg and I. Rydin[16], I. Sletaune[17], J. Weis[18] and many others. However, they have not worked out a systematic and synthesized understanding of peculiarities in political perception of immigration processes in the countries of the Visegrad group, what in fact makes the aim and the task of the current research.

To achieve the abovementioned goal we mainly appeal to the remark made by J. Rovny, who states that political perception of immigration processes in the countries of the Visegrad group must be interpreted in the context of the ternary interrelation of such factors as communist heritage, federalism and dichotomy "nation – ethnical minorities", which are denoted on the left-right ideological positioning of political aspects of party competitiveness, in particular with special emphasis on the issues of immigration[19]. This, in its turn, has an impact on the way how parties, political elites and public articulate their positions concerning perception of immigration processes and elaboration and correction of immigration policy in the each country of the Visegrad group.

Instrumentally it follows certain logics: 1) position of a political force, concerning the nation and rights of ethnical minorities, is connected with its position towards immigration processes and vice versa; 2) communist heritage, in particular social-political division "center – periphery" caused by it, generates party competitiveness referring to the problems of immigration processes. From the perspective of the countries of the Visegrad group it is represented in the fact that comprehension of immigration processes is diversified: first of all, in due time in peripheral Slovakia, where ethnical minority and titular nation of the Slovaks derive not from the center (which was represented by the Czechs) of the former federation, left political forces do not support multiculturalism, ethnic rights and immigration, whereas right forces are inclined to do this; secondly, in due time in non-peripheral Czech Republic, where an ethnic majority, and nowadays titular nation of the Czechs derives from the center of the former federation, left forces usually support multiculturalism, rights of national minorities and immigration, whereas right forces do not do that; thirdly, in unitary/ethnical centrist (non-federative from the beginning) Hungary and Poland transformation of former left political forces presupposed systematic positioning of left and right parties as to multiculturalism, rights of ethnical minorities and immigration policy, and moreover it was done in the way that reformed left political forces appear to bear a relation to perception of migration issues, whereas non-reformed ones do not. Such logics is supplemented (in particular in Poland) by the role and place of church referring to immigration issues, because religion is opposed to the tendency of ethnical minorities and immigrants

16   Sjöberg U., Rydin I., *Discourses on media portrayals of immigrants and the homeland*, Presented at ECREA's 2nd European Communication Conference, November 25–28, 2008, Barcelona.

17   Sletaune I., *Anti-immigration parties in the European Parliament*, Wyd. University of Oslo 2013.

18   Weis J., *Migration Policy in the Slovak Republic: Argumentation Analysis of Political Party Positions*, Wyd. Department of Government Uppsala University 2016.

19   Rovny J., The Other "other": Party Responses to Immigration in Eastern Europe, „*Comparative European Politics*" 2014, vol 12, nr. 6, s. 637–662.; Rovny J., Communism, Federalism, and Ethnic Minorities: Explaining Party Competition Patterns in Eastern Europe, „*World Politics*" 2014, vol 66, nr. 4, s. 669–708.

to adhere to liberal position and tolerance[20], and thus significantly influences behavior, rhetoric and activity of political forces.

In general it argues that the position of political parties and voters as to immigration in the countries of the Visegrad group is "significantly ideologically structured", initially due to the experience of positioning of ethnical minorities during the period of socialism; in addition due to the consequences of interpretation and perception of European immigration crisis. Correspondingly, it is represented in the fact that in addition to parties' positions in the countries of the Visegrad group, different patterns concerning perception of immigration issues, have predominantly become a precondition for "distorted" and "inversed" (on the contrary to Western European countries) focus of interparty competitiveness. As a result, we get the effect, according to which homogeneity or heterogeneity of the population of the country over the period of socialism forms post-communist country in the way that it determines the structure of political system by means of ideology. Consequently, parties' views on the rights of ethnic minorities are determined advantages over the questions of immigration and integration of immigrants.

Additional significance, in determining political comprehension of immigration processes in the countries of the Visegrad group, is attached in the way to what extent polities and political parties are interested in the national issues, especially against the background of the last European immigration crisis. It is especially actual taking into account the fact that nowadays countries of the region more often come under criticism due to their Euro-skeptic, nationalistic, Euro-populist, anti-immigrant anti-European and even non-European position, rhetoric and activity[21]. It is quite important at least due to growing importance of the region after its deeper integration into the EU. Correspondingly, an outline as to their attitude to the questions of national character (including those of nation, nationalism and nationalistic ideology) given by different countries and parties in the Visegrad group is an indicator of how they perceive and interpret current immigration processes. The point is that namely parties are one of the main participants in social discussion concerning civil issues, and in the political system they usually are representatives of people's thoughts and form public discourses referring to different issues, in particular immigration problems.

In this context, in particular on the basis of comparative content-analysis of electoral manifests of political parties (less often electoral manifests represented by candidates for presidency and programs of governments) in the countries of the Visegrad group (first of all from the perspective of parliamentary elections as the elections of the "first line" and not European and regional elections as the elections of the "second order"), it has been discovered that the region makes use of different approaches applied by political forces referring to the national range of problems and immigration processes[22]. In particular,

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[20]   Rovny J., The Other "other": Party Responses to Immigration in Eastern Europe, „*Comparative European Politics*" 2014, vol 12, nr. 6, s. 637–662.; Hodor K., Kosinska A., Polish Perceptions on the Immigration Influx: A Critical Analysis, „*University of Bologna Law Review*" 2016, vol 1, nr. 2, s. 242–270.

[21]   Husák J., Schütz O., Vít M., National Identity of the Political Parties in the Visegrad Region, „*L'Europe en Formation*" 2012, vol 2, nr. 365, s. 265–287.

[22]   Husák J., Schütz O., Vít M., National Identity of the Political Parties in the Visegrad Region, „*L'Europe en Formation*" 2012, vol 2, nr. 365, s. 265–287.

it has been ascertained that in Hungary traditionally prevails protectionist, isolation, anti-national, but aimed at "great" ("greater") nation approach. Poland is characterized by a combination of liberal, liberal-national, conservative-national and religious-national approaches as to understanding national issues and immigration processes[23]. Slovakia conventionally is determined by liberal-conservative, cultural-nationalistic, nationalistic and right-liberal approaches as well as an approach towards the Slovak minority. Finally, Hungary is defined by post-modernistic, European, homogeneous, populist, nationalist and communist approaches. In the context of the region it is synthesized by the fact that the Visegrad four is traditionally focused on nationalistic, liberal, exclusive and national-conservative approaches and rhetoric of the "great nation" approach in the process of interpreting national issues and immigration processes. In general, we may conclude that immigration problems in the countries of the Visegrad group much depend on conceptualization of parties' approaches to nationalism.

Herewith, is was observed that the nationalistic approach to interpretation of immigration processes concentrates on supremacy of the nation and national collectiveness, Christian values (thus civilized-Christian nation) and patriotism, as well as divine logics (especially in the cases of Poland, Hungary and Slovakia) and national pride (in education, training and science), and therefore is based on hostile and questionable perception of immigration as an unnecessary and even dangerous threat (at least when it is not Christian), of immigrants as people, who can be deprived of rights, freedoms and liberties.

Thus nationalists (in particular such political forces as "Hungarian Justice and Life Party" in Hungary, "The League of Polish Families" and the Polish National Party in Poland, the Slovak National Party, the Slovak People's Party and the People's Party "Our Slovakia" in Slovakia and the National Party and the Workers' Party in the Czech Republic) stand for tough laws on immigration and construction (as an ideal model) of a homogeneous society. In its turn, national-conservative approach is less radical and is determined by formation of a national state and providing security and safety to its nation and thus is determined by a non-hostile attitude to other peoples, national minorities and immigration processes, however, if they do not threaten the titular nation. It is represented in the ideological positions of political forces, first of all in Poland and Slovakia, such as the "Law and Justice" and the "Self-Defense" (in Poland) and the "Direction – Social Democracy" and the "Movement for a Democratic Slovakia" (in Slovakia), as well as partially in rhetoric and activity of the Czech parties the "Sovereignty" and the "Public Affairs". Rather similar is the Hungarian-centric approach to a "great nation", which as described by the following political forces the "Hungarian Civic Alliance – Fidesz", "The Hungarian Democratic Forum – MDF" and "The Movement for a Better Hungary" strives for both comprehension of the national state and restoration of its former (historical) greatness and the essence of the nation not as a unity of Hungarians with the same values, history and culture, but as a supertemporal group, which composes the state and people of Hungary, who identify themselves with the country[24]. What concerns a liberal approach, it acts beyond the ideas of the

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[23] Hodor K., Kosinska A., Polish Perceptions on the Immigration Influx: a Critical Analysis, *„University of Bologna Law Review"* 2016, vol 1, nr. 2, s. 242–270.

[24] Husák J., Schütz O., Vít M., National Identity of the Political Parties in the Visegrad Region, *„L'Europe en Formation"* 2012, vol 2, nr. 365, s. 265–287.

nation but appeals to the supremacy of the society as a unity of citizens in a country, and thus supports Euro-integration component of immigration policy. First of all, it is represented in manifests of such Slovak and Czech political forces as the "Tradition Responsibility Prosperity" (the Czech Republic) and the Slovak Democratic and Christian Union, "The Alliance of New Citizens" and the "Most-Hid" (Slovakia). In its turn, a unique or exclusive approach is based on the ideas and principles of liberalism and democracy, however it is careful as to external influences, as every culture and society in totality of their citizens, and not nations have their own specific values, which must be protected in a pluralistic competition. Therefore, political forces which represent this approach, for example "The Hungarian Democratic Forum" (partially) and the Hungarian Socialist Party in Hungary, "The Civil Platform" and "The Polish People's Party" in Poland, The Christian Democratic Movement, the "Freedom and Solidarity", the "Direction – Social Democracy" (partially) in Slovakia, the Civic Democratic Party, the Czech Social-Democratic Party and the Christian-Democratic Union – Czechoslovak People's Party, appeal to the ideas of equality and rights for all people, though insist on tough rules, concerning immigration policy and rely on disguised xenophobia. Finally, such approach is an anti-nationalistic appeal to an obvious refusal from nationalistic ideology and policy, rejection of the notion of nation, opposition to cultural-educational policy, revision of history, but on the contrary stands for international, including migration, solidarity between countries and continents and constructing an open society and state. It is traditionally characteristic of such parties as "The Alliance of Free Democrats", the "Politics Can Be Different", the Hungarian Socialist Party in Hungary, the "Democratic Left Alliance" and "the Left and Democrats" in Poland and the "Alliance of Freedom" and "The Green Party" in the Czech Republic[25]. From the perspective of the countries of the Visegrad group these approaches are supplemented by a specific position of the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia, which insists on deep integration in social and immigration policies, however on the basis of appealing to the ideas of internationalism and not European identity, as well as the approach towards the Slovak minority, which is represented by the Slovak Party of the Hungarian coalition, stands for extending rights of minorities and immigrants, underlines importance of cooperation and tolerance, though with an inclination to the national interests of the Hungarian minority[26]. In this context it is notable that political comprehension of the issues of immigration processes in the countries of the Visegrad group are both nationally (i.e. in each country) and regionally (i.e. in the region in general) determined and oriented. To represent the specific nature of national party-political and social-political perception of immigration processes we appeal to the experience of ideological positioning of parties in Slovakia and the Czech Republic and determination of social-political processes around the immigration discourse in Hungary and Poland, and to reveal regional patterns of social-political view of immigration processes we appeal to the peculiarities of political process both in the Visegrad four and some of its members.

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[25] Husák J., Schütz O., Vít M., National Identity of the Political Parties in the Visegrad Region, „L'Europe en Formation" 2012, vol 2, nr. 365, s. 265–287.

[26] Husák J., Schütz O., Vít M., National Identity of the Political Parties in the Visegrad Region, „L'Europe en Formation" 2012, vol 2, nr. 365, s. 265–287.

Approaching Slovakia it is necessary to admit that this is the country where immigration can be treated as a relatively new phenomenon, because till 1989/1990 its borders were under such strict control that only certain groups of immigrants could cross them, in particular those, appointed by the ruling elites[27]. These groups of people were concentrated in certain social-economic spheres and thus as immigrants were considered only those foreigners who moved into their direction. Correspondingly, what refers to them any political discussion was excluded. But in the course of time and nowadays, especially after finalization of Euro-integration processes and even to a bigger extent after the beginning of the European immigration crisis and taking into account that Slovakia is a heterogeneous country[28], immigration situation in Slovakia diversified and predetermines its variable social-political perception. Therefore, there is comprehension that Slovak parties initially did not pay special attention (and did it only contextually on the background of other problems) to the issues of immigration in their political programs, but started appealing to it since 2013-2015, and especially before the parliamentary elections in 2016.

For example, it is represented in the manifests of the political force "Direction – Social Democracy", which initially traditionally named "immigration and unfavorable demographic development" among other problems, namely demographic ones, as well as "global transformations in economy" or "climate changes"[29], but intentionally started appealing to immigration problems after 2012-2016, in particular in the context of arguing the "security needs". As a result, the political force focused on the problem of accepting only those immigrants, who are Christians and refugees from zones of military conflicts, but was against the EU principle of solidarity and quota-share division of refugees as a result of the European immigration crisis[30]. In a similar way the Slovak Democratic and Christian Union – Democratic Party initially considered the issues of immigration among other problems in electoral manifests, namely work places[31], terrorism, state failures, regional conflicts, organized crimes, corruption etc[32], but later, in particular on the background of humanitarian problems and security issues as well as before the 2016 parliamentary elections, started to appeal to it more expressively, because it began opposing the European policy of migration solidarity[33]. But even despite this, the party does not have a strict immigration policy and program, but is characterized by a number of intra-party variants of comprehending the problem. Therefore, the political force often positions itself as neutral in question of immigration issues and European refugee crisis. In its turn the party "Most-Hid", which in its discourse actively appeal to migration problems, is doing this on the background of national minorities protection [34], however, and this is quite surprisingly, it stands against the quota-share division of refugees in order to solve immigration crisis in

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[27] Androvilov J., Immigration in Current Political Discourse – The Case of Slovakia within the European Union, „*Annual of Language and Politics and Politics of Identity*" 2013, vol 7, s. 5–22.

[28] Billy L., *Immigration issues in Slovak politics*, Wyd. Univerzita Palackého v Olomouci 2012.

[29] *Programové zameranie strany SMER–SD pre volebné obdobie 2012–2016*, Wyd. SMER-SD 2012, s. 4.

[30] Weis J., *Migration Policy in the Slovak Republic: Argumentation Analysis of Political Party Positions*, Wyd. Department of Government Uppsala University 2016.

[31] *Programové zameranie strany SMER–SD pre volebné obdobie 2012–2016*, Wyd. SMER-SD 2012, s. 9.

[32] *Volebny program SDKU pre volby 2012*, Wyd. SDKU-DS 2012.

[33] *Transcript Parliamentary Debate n. 54: Date: 16/9/2015 – 7/10/2015*, Wyd. Narodna Rada Slovenskej Republiky 2015, s. 97, 99.

[34] Rovny J., The Other "other": Party Responses to Immigration in Eastern Europe, „*Comparative European Politics*" 2014, vol 12, nr. 6, s. 652.

the countries EU-members[35]; the "Freedom and Solidarity" is the party, which on the bases of security factors, EU sovereignty prefer using anti-immigration discourse taking into account economic factors[36]; the "Ordinary People and Independent Personalities" is a party close to immigration issues only in questions concerning security/integration stability of Slovakia and the European Union, though it speaks against obligatory refugee quotas[37]. A bit more to the immigrant issues appeal conservative and nationalistic forces in Slovakia, in particular the Christian Democratic Movement and the Slovak National Party. The former, for example, addresses immigrant question from the perspective of such articulations as security, integration, economy, labor market, welfare and humanitarian dimensions, as well as Christian values and Christian democracy and interprets immigration as a way to solve a predicted demographic crisis in Slovakia[38]. At the same it insists on attracting into the country only "cultural immigrants" and their cultural integration[39], and therefore traditionally appeals to the need to introduce strict admission control, however, it not so often describes immigration as a possible social and cultural security threat to the national and traditional culture of Slovakia (in particular protesting to the policy of multiculturalism), and at the same time denies obligatory refugee quotas[40]. The latter, in its turn, is on the whole characterized by appealing to the problem of auchthonous minorities, focusing its rhetoric on anti-immigrant rhetoric.

In general, it is observed that the "Direction – Social Democracy", the "Ordinary People and Independent Personalities" and the "Freedom and Solidarity" make a strict stand against immigration, the Christian-Democratic Movement generally speaks against immigration, the Slovak Democratic and Christian Union – Democratic Party takes a neutral stance as to immigration, while the "Most-Hid" is not against, but on occasion is even for immigration. The significance of the conclusion is that both left and right parties in Slovakia (what is not observed in other countries of the region) can make a stand against immigration. It was also found that the problem of immigration processes in Slovakia was at first neutral (secondary), but later, especially after joining the EU and the economic crisis of 2008-2009, this issue became "economized"[41] (or economically oriented), and more later, in particular after a new turn of the European immigration crisis of 2014/2015 it became securitized (or security oriented). However, the discourse of economization is predominantly more typical for social-democratic and liberal parties and politicians, as it is usually based on the idea of immigration as a "flexible mobility", while securitized discourse is peculiar of conservative and nationalistic parties and politicians, as it is grounded on perception of immigration as a threat to national security and interests. Thus, at the beginning immigrants in Slovakia were perceived as "friendlies", but later transformed into "others" or "foreigners", as they became

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[35] *Transcript Parliamentary Debate n. 54: Date: 16/9/2015 – 7/10/2015*, Wyd. Narodna Rada Slovenskej Republiky 2015, s. 37

[36] *Volebny program SaS pre buduce generacie*, Wyd. Sloboda a solidarita 2012.

[37] Weis J., *Migration Policy in the Slovak Republic: Argumentation Analysis of Political Party Positions*, Wyd. Department of Government Uppsala University 2016.

[38] Weis J., *Migration Policy in the Slovak Republic: Argumentation Analysis of Political Party Positions*, Wyd. Department of Government Uppsala University 2016.

[39] *Silnejsie Slovensko – zacfna to pracou*, Wyd. KDH 2012.

[40] *Transcript Parliamentary Debate n. 54: Date: 16/9/2015 – 7/10/2015*, Wyd. Narodna Rada Slovenskej Republiky 2015, s. 8

[41] Buonfino A., Between Unity and Plurality: The Politicization and Securitization of the Discourse of Immigration in Europe, „*New Political Science*" 2004, vol 26, nr. 1, s. 38.

interpreted as objects, which could be managed[42]. And even despite the fact that Slovakia is probably the least "immigrant" country of the EU and its public is probably the least informed, but at the same time is the most categorical towards immigration issues[43].

It opens a field to form migration policy "behind closed doors" and contributes to blur of boundaries between political and administrative components of managing immigration[44]. Thus, a meaningful conclusion is that in Slovak immigration policy and political discourse, predominates an emphasis on national interests and security[45]. However, it refers to perceiving new topics and discourse elements of the "common" vision of solidarity policy in the EU. It is supplemented by the fact that Slovak public is characterized by the "fear of unknown", as a result of which immigrants quite often (and after 2015 even more often) are treated as members of "foreign culture", as they disturb Slovak "major society"[46]. Even despite the fact that the main mass of immigrants in Slovakia are from the Czech Republic, Ukraine and Romania, less from Vietnam and China, all they quite well integrate into the Slovak society and are vital for the structure of the Slovak labor market. In addition to this it is concluded by the fact that irrelevance in migration issues within the Slovak political life is a result of unawareness of voters as to the topic a little number of foreigners in the Slovakia, whose presence (at least until 2015) did not cause any serious problems and consequently reaction of Slovak politicians.

With reference to the Czech Republic, this country as well as Slovakia, does not have a long political history of immigration and refugees, especially taking into account the political situation till 1989, which is known for the fact that former Czechoslovakia generated more refugees than it received[47]. It is largely presupposed by a relative homogeneity of the Czech society, as a result of which immigration processes in the country are traditionally interpreted as economic oriented. This is testified by the public poll data, which show that a very large part of Czechs agree on admission labor migrants[48]. At least up to 2015, when the statistics became much worse and thus, on the contrary to the situation which was formed in 2010, immigration became the subject of political-electoral discourse. It is represented in the diversified comprehension of immigration processes by various political parties.

For example, the Civic Democratic Party treats immigration issues from a generally social point of view and does not appeal to rapid naturalization of immigrants. It is predetermined by the fact that ideologically the political force stands on the principles of nationality and that is why is focused on peaceful coexistence of the majority of the nation with ethnic minorities. As a matter of fact the latter are

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[42] Filadelfiova J., *Sondy do kulturnej diverzity na Slovensku*, Wyd. IVO 2010, s. 114.

[43] Billy L., *Immigration issues in Slovak politics*, Wyd. Univerzita Palackého v Olomouci 2012.

[44] Androvilov J., Immigration in Current Political Discourse – The Case of Slovakia within the European Union, „*Annual of Language and Politics and Politics of Identity*" 2013, vol 7, s. 5–22.

[45] Bigo D., *To Reassure and Protect after September 11th*, „Social Science Research Council After September 11 Archive" 2002, źródło: http://essays.ssrc.org/sept11/essays/bigo.htm

[46] Billy L., *Immigration issues in Slovak politics*, Wyd. Univerzita Palackého v Olomouci 2012.

[47] Hokovsky R., Janda J., *Immigration and Integration of Minorities in View of Czech Political Parties*, [w:] Hokovsky R., Kopal J. (eds.), *Politics and Policies of Integration in Austria, Hungary, Czechia, Denmark and at the EU Level*, Wyd. League of Human Rights & European Values Think-Tank 2013.

[48] Kusnirakova T., Cizinsky P., Dvacet let ceske migracni politiky: liberalni, restriktivni, anebo jeste jina?, „*Geografie*" 2011, vol 116, nr. 4, s. 497–517.

conceived as potential benefit for the Czech Republic, as a result of what the country must be open not to all immigrants, but only to those who are ready to work and conduct mutually profitable life. Taking into account that the political force is moderately Euro-skeptical, it is officially neutral as to European immigration policy of solidarity, nevertheless in practice it is based on pragmatic ideas and overall values of respect and equality. What concerns the Czech Social-Democratic Party, this political force, first of all, stands for integration of immigrants into the society and its everyday life. From this perspective, the position that the Czech Republic must welcome immigrants, who are willing to work, and not just "enjoy" generous social system, is at the same time combined with the systems of control over immigration, in particular to prevent illegal immigration and organized crime. In its turn, the party "Tradition Responsibility Prosperity" takes a stand for immigration processes, constructed on the grounds of the knowledge of the Czech language, respect towards values and ideas and openness to the culture of majority, but it emphasizes that the titular majority must be ready to receive immigrants and their values. In this context immigration processes must be controlled by the state and aimed at providing people's security. The party "Sovereignty" on the grounds of its manifestation concerning citizenship, nationality and sovereignty remarks that the priority in the Czech Republic must be protection of national interests, Christian values, cultural and historical heritage and legal system, but not promotion of immigration processes. Therefore, the political force rejects principles of multiculturalism and openness, stands for filtration of immigrants on the basis of religious criteria. Similar position is shared by the Labor Party, which calls to conduct public and not obligatory politically correct discussions, concerning the problems of immigration and integration. The point is that immigration is interpreted by the political force as an undesirable phenomenon and political asylum must be provided only to those refugees, who are willing to respect national traditions of the Czech Republic and conduct decent life together with other citizens of the country. It is also articulated, that there is sense to welcome immigrants with a high level of education, work experience and respect towards Christian values and not cover immigration with birthrate problems. Finally, Czech communists support flexible integration in the social and immigration policy, however on the grounds of the ideas of internationalism, but not European identity.

All this argues that immigration issues are traditionally quite developed in the Czech Republic, but special activity is observed after another turn of the European immigration crisis, which started flaring in 2014/2015[49]. As a result, not only Czech politicum appeared to be divided, but also mass media and the Czech society was, as there emerged at least two camps, which differently perceive European and Czech immigration policy adopted to overcome immigration crisis. Correspondingly, it became new for the Czech Republic that since 2015 in the country extremely widespread was anti-immigrant social propaganda, accompanied by a vivid wave of Islamophobia. On the contrary, pro-immigration discourse can be interpreted as a response to the predominant populist anti-immigrant discourse. This inadequate representation of pro-immigration discourse leads to the fact that some scholars consider the

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[49] Meciar M., Immigration Discourses in the Czech Republic from the Perspective of the Current Refugee Crisis, *"Beykent Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi"* 2016., vol 9, nr. 1, s. 148–161.

existence of two radical camps within political debates, concerning refugees, to be a "myth"[50]. For example, P. Pospech states that at the time when anti-immigrant discourse is represented by radical nationalism and in public debates the camp of radical multiculturalism prevails, Czech mass media still carry on reproducing the above mentioned myth. The point is that pro-immigrant position lies in the fact that it is represented by intellectual elite and mainly by scholars, who are treated suspiciously in the Czech society and not by activists from non-governmental organizations and professionals in the sphere of immigration[51]. On the other hand, of great importance is the remark made by U. Sjoberg and I. Rydin[52] that mass media significantly influence the way immigrants are perceived. As they traditionally represent immigrants as an "indiscrete mass", which leads to social (social-political) interpretation that "all immigrants are the same", "unethical"[53] and "are homogeneously represented by Muslims"[54].

If we focus our attention in general on regional patterns of political perception of the issues of immigration processes in the countries of the Visegrad group, we appeal the experience of Hungary, which to the biggest extent faced the problem of illegal immigrants and whose political position, both officially and unofficially, is the most strict, and thus it largely determines political processes in the other countries of the region[55]. Quite important is the fact that Hungary, as well as other countries of the region, did not face the problem of refugees before 2014/2015, and therefore had to act hastily and often even blindly. As a result, it appeared that policy performed by the Hungarian government and immigrant policy of Hungary in general (as well as in other countries in the Visegrad group) was not either unanimous or mature, but was rather "protective" (even in the economic context[56]), because in fact it corresponded with and "embryonic" state of immigration[57].

When it comes to Poland, in this country perception of immigration processes is preconditioned by all abovementioned attributes and other factors, in particular by the position of the Polish Roman Catholic Church[58]. Besides, Polish people are rather versatile in their perception of immigration. It is known that Poles with higher education not so often express their hostile attitude towards immigrants; Poles positively conceive people from the territories close to them (geographically – especially from eastern countries, but treat immigrants from foreign or historically hostile countries with disrespect[59]); Poles

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[50] Pospech P., UprchKci a mytus o dvou radikalmch taborech, *"Hospodarske noviny"* February 9, 2016.

[51] Pospech P., UprchKci a mytus o dvou radikalmch taborech, *"Hospodarske noviny"* February 9, 2016.

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[55] Hárs Á., Balogi A., Bernát A., Feischmidt M., Kováts A., Nyíri P., Péteri G., Zakariás I., Immigration countries in Central and Eastern Europe: The Case of Hungary, *"IDEA Working Paper"* 2009, vol 12, źródło: http://www.idea6fp.uw.edu.pl/pliki/WP12_Hungary.pdf

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[58] Hodor K., Kosinska A., Polish Perceptions on the Immigration Influx: a Critical Analysis, *"University of Bologna Law Review"* 2016, vol 1, nr. 2, s. 242–270.

[59] Bojar H., To Be an Immigrant in Poland An Analysis of the Experiences of Immigrants from Non-EU Countries, *"Polish Social Review"* 2007, vol 160, s. 401–403.

with lower incomes have a tendency to treat immigrants negatively, especially those who are satisfied with their earnings; the higher social-economic evaluation of personal situation is, the more favorable is attitude towards immigrants and refugees; rural people and people from small towns more rarely show their positive attitude towards other nations (in particular immigrants), in comparison with other population[60]. It results in the fact that Poles-anti-immigrants are united under anti-immigrant slogans, like "Poland is for Poles", "Great Catholic Poland", "Stop Islamisation", "Yesterday Moscow, Today Brussels takes away our freedom" and so on. Doing this, regular citizens try to show their social-political position to the government and influence its decisions concerning immigrants in Poland.

In fact more and more vivid becomes the point that "the spirit of mutual concern among Poles" is in the process of strengthening, and national and xenophobia attitudes come to the real and virtual political arena. This situation is supplemented by the fact that Poles are absolutely open, expressing their extremist views on the immigrant problem, without any disguise[61]. On the other hand, those who support an influx of immigrants to Poland assume that this contributes to cultural enrichment of the country, opens new possibilities, promotes openness of Polish society towards other nations and enhance demographic situation. In addition they accentuate benefits for the Polish labor market, because presence of qualified experts with their specific knowledge and unqualified laborers getting lower wages, than Polish workers do, contribute to the economic development of Poland. But even in this context, Poles less welcome Islamic immigrants and refugees, mainly because of the preconceptions that their presence may cause conflicts based on cultural or religious features and constitutes a threat to the national security of Poland. It is important that Poles gradually get accustomed to the presence of immigrants in their country and this even finds its representation in political discourse. However, in general it is obvious that integration of immigrants into the Polish society is the source of many challenges for modern and future of the country and its citizens.

Concluding, we may argue that political perception of immigration issues in the countries of the Visegrad group comprises two stages: before and after a new turn of the immigration crisis in Europe. Correspondingly, neither right extremism nor Euro-skepticism could become new terms in the political dictionary and discourse of the countries in the region, however with the beginning of the refugee crisis, which started in 2014/2015 these phenomena have increased their ominous and destructive power and become extremely actual, for the first time ever, in the countries of the Visegrad group[62]. As a reaction to them and to social-political processes in individual countries, extremist rhetoric gained its popularity among mainstream political forces. The main goal of such actions was preservation of their electoral popularity and some weakening of radicalism in the society. At the same time, general political process in the Visegrad countries became significantly radicalized and

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[60] Hodor K., Kosinska A., Polish Perceptions on the Immigration Influx: a Critical Analysis, „*University of Bologna Law Review*" 2016, vol 1, nr. 2, s. 242–270.

[61] Hodor K., Kosinska A., Polish Perceptions on the Immigration Influx: a Critical Analysis, „*University of Bologna Law Review*" 2016, vol 1, nr. 2, s. 242–270.

[62] Kolar T., *The Migration Crisis and the Rise of Right-wing Extremism and Euroscepti*cism, Paper on the occasion of the international conference „Migration's Influence on Euroscepticism and Political Radicalism", May 27, 2016.

actualized, though it has not become homogeneous as to its parameters: the most powerful with elements of authoritarianism it has become in Hungary, powerful with elements of authoritarianism it is in Poland (where the society is very informed as to immigration issues, and the political process is turning around two predominant parties); much diminished it was in Slovakia and the Czech Republic (where population is not well informed as to immigration issues and the political process is not focused on just dominating parties).

However, even despite this and the fact that political process in the countries of the region is predominantly turning around mainstream and institutionalized political parties and movements, the so-called anti-immigrant political forces became specially widespread (in particular in the course of the European immigration crisis development). The key reason for their development was the fact that the issues of immigration processes and immigration policy in the countries of the Visegrad group are represented in the construction of one division of a "new" policy, which comprises the questions of protection of rights and liberties of ethnical population in some countries, solution of immigrant problems (in particular refugee crisis) and preservation of the national heritage. It was incorporated in the fact that since the 90s of the 20th century but more over 2003-2018 some new political parties in Poland, Slovakia, Hungary and the Czech Republic started positioning themselves as explicitly anti-immigrant, due to which their phenomenon was described as specific[63]. The main attribute and marker of distinction between anti-immigrant parties traditionally is their mainly populist and even xenophobia slant against immigrants. Herewith, it is analytically and on average observed that: political-ideological principles of anti-immigrant parties in the Visegrad countries, especially in Slovakia, Poland and Hungary, less in the Czech Republic, became Euro-skepticism, anti-globalism, mono-nationalism and its predominance over ethnic and religious diversity (in Poland towards Jewish minority, in Slovakia towards Hungarians, Roma and representatives of sexual minorities; in Hungary towards people of Jewish origin, Roma and representatives of sexual minorities; in the Czech Republic towards Roma), radicalism, extremism, xenophobia, neo-Nazism and populism. It is notable that rhetoric of such parties in the Visegrad group was given publicity after 2010 and 2014/2015, when the problems of the EU immigration policy developed to the maximum extent; in particular the European immigration crisis reached its peak. All this allowed us argue that anti-immigrant parties politicize the issues of immigration processes in the countries of the Visegrad group, as on the background of increase in their electoral successfulness (especially during the migration crisis) it is naturally (as an accommodation reaction) that there is a growth in anti-immigrant rhetoric of the mainstream (leading) political forces and public in general in any of the countries of the region or the region itself.

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