

## Conference: “Tackling the Root Causes of the Migration Challenge in a Diverging Europe”

### Panel 1 Report: (Evan) Migration Challenge and its Implications for the EU

**Speakers:** Vít Beneš, Senior Researcher, Institute of International Relations Prague

Jakub Eberle, Researcher, Institute of International Relations Prague

Zora Hesová, Research Fellow, AMO Research Center

**Moderator:** Ondřej Horký-Hlucháň, Deputy Director for Research, Senior Researcher, Institute of International Relations Prague

On November 1, a two-part panel discussion was held in the Czernin Palace concerning the ongoing migration crisis in the EU. In panel one, the primary factors affecting the EU were discussed along with issues concerning the union’s image. Following a brief introduction from the IIR’s Ondřej Horký-Hlucháň, the three speakers presented their cases.

Mr. Beneš began by discussing a paper dealing with the crisis that specifically assesses the impact it has had on EU policies and politics by him and Jan Kovář, a senior researcher at the IIR. The reintroduction of border checks in particular has become a thorny issue, as it has generated a largely negative symbolic impression of the entire union. Moreover, if such checks persist, commuters, such as workers who travel on the Øresund Bridge between Denmark and Sweden, will be detrimentally affected by increased travel times, which will contribute to a potential decline in economic activity. Tourism is another sector which could suffer in the medium term due to the continuation of border checks, which could potentially lead to increased costs and delays for tour operators. Beneš then concluded with a few remarks concerning the EU’s structural funds and cohesion policies, raising questions as to whether it is viable to keep sending funds to EU countries in an attempt to deal with the crisis. He finished with the thought that the world expects the EU to solve pressing complex trans-national issues, and the migration issue has not been treated as one up until this point.

The second panellist, Jakub Eberle, primarily focused on the image of the EU and how it has been shaped detrimentally by a series of negatively perceived events. Within his presentation he posed several questions pertaining to whether the perception of the EU has been tarnished by the immigration crisis. Although Eberle responded in the affirmative to this question, his answer contained several reservations. Although the citizenry of the EU overwhelmingly considers migration to be a major issue, for most people it is largely an abstract issue, as many citizens of EU states rarely encounter the physical effects of migration on a regular basis. Reports compiled by the Pew Research Center and Eurobarometer showed that 48% of EU citizens view the crisis

as an issue for the union as a whole, while only 28% see it as a problem for individual member-states, and a mere 8% feel it is an issue that affects them personally.

Eberle's second question focused on the public trust in and perception of the EU, and whether they have deteriorated. Statistics show that the number of people who have a positive image of the EU has dropped by 7% in recent years. Importantly, trust in the EU has dropped significantly in a number of recent polls. It is important to note, however, that the trust of EU citizens in EU institutions is higher than their trust in their own national institutions. Eberle emphasised that while the image of the EU is not a particularly optimistic one, it is not as bleak as many consider it to be. Eberle then concluded by stating that there is a clear correlation between the perception of the EU and the migration crisis owing to the union being directly linked with the issue more than the member-states. Currently, the public of the EU is largely unsatisfied with the union's handling of the refugee crisis, although it is unclear as to what extent this is the case, as the refugee crisis is often confused with the migration crisis. According to the Pew Research Center, a large portion of the dissatisfaction with the EU among Europeans is due to Brussels' handling of the refugee crisis and not necessarily just the migration crisis. Although the migration and refugee crises are not the only contingencies affecting the perception of the EU, owing to the lingering effects of the Eurozone crisis, this negative perception has been sharpened by the political narratives of individual governments. These narratives, which paint the EU as the instigator of these crises, have contributed to a rising Euroscepticism and a downturn in the image of the union as a whole.

The final speaker of the first panel, Zora Hesová, responded to the other guests and provided a fresh perspective to the issues discussed. Hesová agreed that many of the controversial actions concerning the refugee and migration crises have primarily been taken by a number of influential member-states within the EU. This development has harmed the unity of the union, particularly since it has also exposed the lack of a coherent and effective EU policy on migration. Although the situation as a whole is not a positive one for the EU, or its constituent member-states, it may, however, lead to further debate and a stronger impetus for the EU to act as a decisive actor in regard to contemporary political, economic, and social issues affecting the union as a whole.

## **Panel 2 Report (Kyle): How the EU Is Implicated in the Migration Challenge: From Problems to Solutions**

**Speakers:** Roderick Parkes, Senior Analyst, European Union Institute for Security Studies

Christian Kvorning Lassen, Research Fellow, EUROPEUM Institute for European Policy

Daniela Lenčěš Chalániová, Dean of the School of International Relations and Diplomacy, Anglo-American University; Associate Research Fellow, Institute of International Relations Prague

**Moderator:** Jakub Eberle, Researcher, Institute of International Relations, Prague

The second panel on the migration crisis included Roderick Parkes, Christian Kvorning Lassen, and Daniela Lenčěš Chalániová. Parkes, a senior analyst from the European Union Institute for Security Studies, began by stating that one of the most fundamental problems amplifying the crisis is the widening gap between experts and policy makers. Such a case can be particularly observed in the EU-Turkey Agreement over the refugee crisis, where there was little consensus between the two groups. Parkes claimed that the EU is currently facing a humanitarian crisis, and therefore all policies which are adopted in connection with it will harm certain interest groups due to the complexity of the issue. One of the most important issues is the failure of developmentalism, an economic theory based on the notion that developing countries should focus on building their internal markets and maintaining a state controlled market, and how its failures to ensure economic growth in the developing world have exacerbated the migration crisis.

In order to resolve the inherent flaws of the existing model of developmentalism several options should be considered. The first option which could be considered is simply the continuation of the existing model. However, such a response would be problematic, as while the model promises universal success, it has not yet reached and is unlikely to reach such an ambitious objective. A second possible response would entail allowing free cross-border migration. This would involve spreading information to potential migrants on how they can successfully cross borders and find positions of employment within the European job market. This would ensure that individuals living in places of low economic development, political instability, and limited opportunities have the possibility of improving their lives via migration. The final possible option would be a shift away from liberalisation and a gradual widening of migration into the EU. Although it remains to be seen as to which approach will be adopted, it is clear that the existing situation is ineffective, and therefore a new strategy to resolve the issues of developmentalism is necessary.

Kvorning Lassen followed the remarks of Parkes by stating that he does not think there is a solution to the current migration crisis. This is primarily the result of a lack of consensus on the root causes of the crisis itself. Within the EU it is possible to observe member-states adopting different stances

on the crisis, with the Hungarian government, for example, holding a diametrically opposed perception to that of the Swedish government. The inability of member-states to agree on fundamental concepts such as the rights given to refugees makes it exceedingly difficult for the EU as a whole to develop a clear strategic policy in regard to the crisis. Although the problem does reside partly on the level of member-states, the culprit which is perceived as being primarily responsible for it is the EU itself. In order to combat this issue a complete rethink of the existing strategy to deal with refugees is crucial, with a need for a long-term approach to creating a system that can effectively manage the increasing migration flows into the EU. An effective system that would distribute the refugees fairly across the EU via a market-based system, with states receiving support depending on the number of refugees they take, would alleviate the pressure on member-states such as Greece, Italy, and Spain. A market-based system would also offer countries the possibility to trade and adjust their refugee quotas with each other. Such a flexible solution would ensure that countries have the opportunity to decide themselves on how they wish to deal with the crisis itself.

Although such a solution would require the strong backing of certain member-states the system could be based on a series of principles. Firstly, refugees could be granted the ability to decide via a preference list which countries they would prefer to live in. Secondly, if a member-state is discovered to be taking refugees but only supporting them at minimal expense, it could be liable for penalisation. By developing a robust distribution framework to deal with the refugee crisis with the support of civil society and member-states, the EU should be able to combat the downward trajectory of its public perception. Although it will be a significant challenge, it is imperative that a long term solution is found which would act as a compromise between the desires of the EU as a whole and those of the member-states.

The final presenter, Daniela Lenčář Chalániová, the Dean of the School of International Relations and Diplomacy of Anglo-American University, primarily focused on the Czech Republic and how European solutions have helped spur public debate, affected Czech institutions, and divided the political spectrum. As a result of the diverging public opinions on the migration crisis it appears the traditional models of political consensus have failed. This is particularly apparent in the Czech Republic, owing to the strong divisions over whether the country should have a policy of open or closed migration. Owing to the growing failures and challenges which beset its social and political institutions, drastic reforms are considered to be necessary; however, few credible solutions have been put forward, leading ultimately to an impasse in the contemporary social and political debate.