



Report

New Pact on Migration and Asylum: Breaking the Deadlock

Žiga Faktor

On 22nd of October 2021, **Think Visegrad platform, Brussels office of EUROPEUM** Institute for European Policy and **Wilfried Martens Centre for European studies** organised an expert round table titled *New Pact on Migration and Asylum: Breaking the Deadlock*. The event was held under the Chatham House Rules, with the participation of experts from the think-tank community as well as diplomats, representatives of the European Commission and UNHCR. In the past, V4 presented a distinctive stance on migration issues; therefore, the main aim of the event was to facilitate discussion on the current deadlock in finding common ground on EU asylum and migration policies' reformation. The discussion started with the introductory remarks from **Žiga Faktor**, Head of EUROPEUM Brussels Office, who presented the Think Visegrad platform and its purpose of bringing topics to Brussels that are vital for the V4 region – including migration.

In contrast to the 2015 migration crisis, the topic of migration is no longer considered the main concern of EU citizens. However, the speakers agreed that the recent developments in Afghanistan and Belarus confirm the challenging nature of migration issues and their potential to develop into the next crisis while highlighting still ongoing divisions among Member States. Therefore, legislation concerning a common European framework on migration continues to be a highly disputed theme. During the event's discussion, speakers expressed their opinions on the *New Pact on Migration and Asylum*, legislation proposed by the European Commission in 2020 aimed at introducing a fresh start on the EU's migration policy.

The New Pact received both sceptical and supportive comments. The critical voices highlighted the extremely complicated nature of the proposal and even questioned its ability to be implemented. As a possible improvement to the proposal, a longer-term negotiating mechanism was proposed, which would ensure that the Member States have enough time and energy to get familiar with the complex nature of the proposal. On the other hand, some speakers

emphasised the progress made by this legislation regarding the inclusion of 'options of solidarity' for the Member States. From this perspective, the core objective of the New Pact is to find a solution that brings the Member States together but also reflects their interests. Moreover, the proposal was designed with the V4's objections in mind, and it should, therefore, be accepted more readily in these countries.

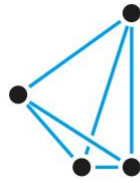
A discussion concerned with the role of the European Union in migration matters and its perception in the Member States also received mixed reactions. Commenting on the positions and narratives of the V4 member states, two panellists from the region were mostly critical of the current trends as the securitisation of the migration topic in their countries is not reflected by the EU. When migration topic is understood from the security perspective, strengthening of physical barriers should not only be accepted but often called for, especially as instruments designed to counter illegal acts. Elaborating on these arguments, a proposition for re-evaluating the current borders procedures to ensure a future of Schengen was suggested. Other speakers, however, disagreed with the understanding of migration as a topic of security and highlighted the importance of saving human lives that are seeking protection. Moreover, a comment directed to the experts from the V4 suggested that the debate about migration should not be changed for a debate on how to get certain member states aboard. When dealing with migration and asylum, the EU's values are according to the panellists needed to guide the decision-making. The proposed next steps were to find a way to deal with this new challenge in a humanitarian manner without being open to abuse by third countries and get beyond the bad impression that we cannot get our act together in Europe by firstly normalising our legislation.

Although there were clear distinctions between the opinions of the participants, the discussion also revealed agreements on certain issues. Starting with the notion of 'getting our act together', the speakers



agreed that although there is a lot of discussion in this regard, actions are currently lacking. Secondly, a general agreement was made on the need for a more technical approach to the EU's migration issues to counter their current highly politicised nature. Strong arguments for common European legislation were repeatedly made from all sides, as the current migration and asylum national systems vary hugely. Lastly, the notion of taking into consideration the stances of candidate countries to the EU was highlighted as an essential part of resolving a migration situation.

As the topic of migration continues to bring new challenges to the European Union and its Member States, the discussions about the possible solutions, compromises, and new legislation remain essential for moving forward. Therefore, in the name of the Brussels office of EUROPEUM Institute for European Policy, we would like to thank all the participants for their presence and contributions, and we hope to meet again in future discussions.



About the EUROPEUM

EUROPEUM Institute for European Policy is a non-profit, non-partisan, and independent think-tank focusing on European integration and cohesion. EUROPEUM contributes to democracy, security, stability, freedom, and solidarity across Europe as well as to active engagement of the Czech Republic in the European Union. EUROPEUM undertakes original research, organizes public events and educational activities, and formulates new ideas and recommendations to improve European and Czech policy making.

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