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Minorities, Diasporas, Refugees in Contemporary Europe

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Minorities, Diasporas, Refugees in Contemporary Europe

Since the beginning of the 21st century, Europe has been facing several political, social and economic challenges, both internally and externally, including the economic and financial crises, the Arab Spring and the accompanying increase in political instability in the Southern Mediterranean, the civil war in Syria, the annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation and war in eastern Ukraine, a pro-Brexit vote in the UK, the election of the EU-oriented Macron as president of France, the emergence of populism and xenophobia in some European countries, especially Poland and Hungary, the debate on the condition of the EU and the future of European integration, the increased terrorist threat in Europe and the importance of security issues, and finally, the mass-migration and refugee crisis.¹ All these developments, directly or indirectly, are changing the dynamics of migration flows—for different reasons, in different directions and with different intensity—on the continent and in its neighborhood. Consequently, this affects the situation of migrant sending and receiving countries and their societies, as well as migrants and their descendants.

In the changing global, regional and national circumstances, multiple aspects of migration and integration of migrants are becoming

1 Cf. C.G. Mazzucelli, A. Visvizi and R. Bee, 'Secular States in a "Security Community": The Migration-Terrorism Nexus?', *Journal of Strategic Security*, vol. 9, no. 3, 2016, pp. 16-27.

more important and require in-depth scientific analysis both at the theoretical and empirical levels. At the same time, historical contexts and the current state of play need to be taken into consideration to combine the lessons learned from the past with today's experience for better management of the future. On the one hand, the mass movements of people and significant ethnic displacement as a consequence of World War II and the collapse of the Soviet Union made the European community aware of the need for action to cooperate in the field of protection of national and ethnic minorities. Since then, many mechanisms and tools have been implemented to secure cultural, linguistic and religious rights at national, bilateral and multilateral levels. However, the ongoing discussion about the right of national minorities to protect their own values and the right of the majority to preserve its national and state identity continues to provoke tensions and political reactions. On the other hand, the Arab Spring and the migrant and refugee crisis of 2014 and later in Europe have brought a new wave of large-scale mixed migration across the Mediterranean. Many of these international migrants have declared themselves in need of international protection, which has resulted in a growing number of asylum applications submitted in European Union (EU) and European Free Trade Association (EFTA) countries. The influx of large numbers of newcomers led to a situation in which some EU members have closed their borders and raised walls (e.g., Hungary on its border with Serbia). In the face of the refugee crisis, the European Commission put on the table its comprehensive response in the form of the "European Agenda on Migration", envisaging the gradual implementation of short, medium and long-term solutions in the area of migration, asylum and border management. Among the key proposals for immediate action were two important mechanisms aiming to provide security for those in need of international protection, especially from Syria. These were the relocation of up to 160,000 asylum seekers from Greece and Italy to other EU countries and a resettlement system of more than 22,000 people from outside the EU to member states and associated countries.²

2 M. Pachocka, 'The Eastern Partnership in Times of the Migrant and Refugee Crisis in the European Union', in: C.E. Pacheco Amaral, V. Cucerescu, G. Gabrichidze, I. Horga, A. Kruglashov, E. Latoszek

As the debate on migration, its causes, implications³ and ramifications develops, it is timely to re-think the broader historical and socio-political framework in which it unfolds. This volume of the *Yearbook of the Institute of East-Central Europe* does just that. The volume starts with deliberations on different aspects of the issue of borders raised by Witold Klaus and Simon Goodman in their papers. Małgorzata Pacek complements this picture by discussing the Dutch approach to the crisis. Another key research topic that appears in several texts is the issue of minorities. Christos Iliadis elaborates on the efforts taken by the Council of Europe through its ROMED programs (I and II) as tools aiming at the integration and empowerment of Roma people. This paper is followed by a case study in co-authorship: Máté Kitanics and Norbert Pap discuss the issue of the Croatian minority of Hungary. The next four papers are devoted to the Eastern European states, referring in turn to the case of Ukrainian migration policy and its European dimension (Hanna Bazhenova), the role of the Russian language as a tool of geopolitical influence (Justyna Ołędzka), the importance of Russian-speaker NGOs in the Baltic states (Aleksandra Kuczyńska-Zonik) and the situation of Lithuanian students at Stefan Batory University in interwar Vilnius (Tomasz Błaszczak). In this way, thanks to the contributions of our authors, our volume constitutes a coherent and comprehensive scientific work.

This special issue would not have been possible without the great support, advice and supervision of Dr. Anna Visvizi, YIESW editor, throughout the span of our work on this volume. The editors would also like to thank the authors, who responded to the open call for papers distributed via social media, kept to the tight deadlines and worked patiently on the guest editors' editorial suggestions. The editors are also very grateful to the reviewers for their valuable and relevant comments on the papers, which allowed us to prepare these high-quality scientific articles.

and M. Pachocka (eds), *EU Association Agreements with Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine: Through Cooperation Towards Integration*, Chişinău-Tbilisi-Chernivtsi: Tipografia "Print-Caro", 2017, pp. 17-31; M. Pachocka, 'The twin migration and refugee crises in Europe: examining the OECD's contribution to the debate', *Yearbook of the Institute of East-Central Europe*, vol. 14, no. 4, 2016, pp. 71-99.

- 3 A. Visvizi, C. Mazzucelli and M. Lytras, 'Irregular migratory flows: Towards an ICTs' enabled integrated framework for resilient urban systems', *Journal of Science and Technology Policy Management*, vol. 8, no. 2, 2017, pp. 227-242.

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