
“EU migration policy and the Visegrad 4”

MIREES Open lecture

On 11th of April 2017, Michela Ceccorulli, PhD, teaching at the Department of Social and Political Sciences, University of Bologna, lectured the MIREES' students on the tricky topic of the refugee crisis, focusing the attention on the position of Visegrad states. Ceccorulli started with a general description of the phenomenon, analyzing the specific reasons which determine the surge of the crisis; specifically, the radical geopolitical changes linked with the eruption of violence and instability in origin countries that has caused conspicuous mass movements towards Europe. This situation resulted in the arrival to Europe of almost 1.1 million of migrants, half of which Syrians, through three main routes: Central Mediterranean Route, Western Balkan Route and Eastern Mediterranean Route. The two EU states mostly involved in this migration are Italy and Greece, on which coasts arrived, respectively, 156.000 and 857.000 persons; the migrants were coming mainly from Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan and Sub Saharan African states. To manage this difficult situation, and because of the lack of coordination at the European level, Italy has developed the autonomous humanitarian program “Mare Nostrum”, with the aim of rescuing migrants in the Mediterranean sea and imprisoning the smugglers. Since 1st November 2014, however, through “Triton” operation, Europe decided to support Italy's actions giving financial aid and practical reinforcement.

Despite this attempt, there are several divergences within the European states about the management of the migrant flows; firstly, the lack of “long period planning” in the strategy of help, secondly, the presence of too many obstacles that obstruct the possibility to exercise the right of asylum. Ceccorulli, at this point, explained the strategies adopted by the European Union to improve the management of the phenomenon; the key point of these strategies was the “permanent relocation system”, which determined an equal division of migrants between all the European states. The criteria established for the relocation concerned the size of population (40%), total GDP

(40%), the average number of the asylum applications over the previous four years (10%) and the unemployment rates (10%).

The Visegrad countries, Slovakia, Hungary, Poland and Czech Republic, largely opposed this program and, during the Bratislava Summit, they proposed an alternative solution called “flexible solidarity”. This alternative solution consisted in the fact that the “countries that do not want to take migrants could contribute to the EU’s migration policy with other means, financially, with equipment or manpower”. The strongest opposition to the European solution came from the Hungarian government, which, in October 2016, organized a referendum against the EU proposal; the Hungarian citizens were called to reply to this question: “are you in favor of the EU being allowed to make the settlement of non-Hungarians obligatory in Hungary even if the parliament does not agree?” The results were debated, because, even if the major part of the population abstained, the 98% of the voters choose to support Orban’s side against the EU proposal. Ceccorulli’s Open lecture has been an exhaustive analysis of the migration issue on the European level; in fact, she was able to analyze the phenomenon from different sides, which were, however, all connected.

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