

## PART I

### MASS IMMIGRATION TO EUROPE – A THREAT OR OPPORTUNITY?

**Guest editor: Marek SOBCZYŃSKI\***

#### FOREWORD

The unexpected massive influx of migrants to Europe in 2015 caused shock in receiving countries. Despite the fact that the scale of migration was not significantly larger than in previous years, the concentration of the inflow of migrants from a few countries, within only a few months, made this phenomenon more vivid. Numerous governments undertook defence actions on a large scale, using administrative, police and then diplomatic measures.

This phenomenon has become an object of interest of politicians, who have built their political capital on the basis of the criticism of Germany's decision to accept refugees, as well as anti-migrants attitudes, but also has become an object of interest of researchers in several science disciplines.

This topic was raised in political and social geography, which was manifested by the organisation of numerous sessions on migration and refugees held at geographical conferences<sup>1</sup> and planned for next year's 34<sup>rd</sup> IGU Con-

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<sup>1</sup> Sessions at EUGEO congresses: *Mobility and migration in Europe* (Budapest, 2015), *Demography, international population mobility and migration* (Brussels, 2017), *Places and spaces of refugee* (Galway, 2019), and the session on *Forced migration* at 33rd IGU Congress (Beijing, 2016).

gress in Istanbul<sup>2</sup> and the annual meeting of the Association of American Geographers<sup>3</sup>.

Since the purpose of Editorial Board of the journal “European Spatial Research and Policy” was to edit the special issue devoted to this currently important research problem, I proposed in this context a topic *Mass immigration to Europe – a threat or opportunity?*

For cooperation in this issue I invited geographers, political scientists and spatial planners from mainly European countries, who have experienced the phenomenon of migration in a special ways.

Finally, in a special issue of ESR&P, six articles devoted to mass migrations to Europe were collected.

As an introduction to the discussed topic, I have proposed my article entitled *Causes and main routes of the mass immigration to Europe in 2015*, which presents the background of the discussed migration process, its causes, migration routes, and the scale of this phenomenon.

The following articles by other researchers are devoted to the case studies showing the policies of national governments towards the influx of migrants, describing themselves as refugees. The situation in Germany, the most important among immigration countries, was presented by Markus Eltges and Wendelin Strubelt in the article *Migration – Germany’s past and present. Thoughts and figures*. Ryszard Żelichowski in an article entitled *Mass immigrations in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Case of Belgium and the Netherlands* presented the policy of two Benelux countries towards the wave of refugees. Two studies were devoted to Italy: Alessandro Vitale in the article *Italy’s approach to East-West and South-North migrations: from lack of knowledge to political use of them* indicated the lack of a concept for a refugee policy in the Italian government, while Mariann Dömös and István Tarrósy in the article *Integration of migrants in Italy: local actors and African communities* discussed the process of integrating African immigrants with the local Italian community. Tolga Levent in an article entitled *A new challenge for urban planning in Turkey: socio-spatial impacts of forced migration* discussed the effects of the influx of migrants to Turkey, including those arriving from Syria in recent years, and showed the impact of this migration on the functioning of Turkish cities.

Unfortunately, despite the invitations extended to authors from Hungary and Greece, no studies could be obtained from those crucial countries regarding the phenomenon of the influx of refugees, which would offer a broader view of the problem of mass migration to Europe in the latter half of the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Despite this absence, one could expect that the presented texts show the diversity of EU policies towards the mass wave of refugees.

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<sup>2</sup> Sessions: *Migrants and refugees democratic rights in local governance; Human mobility and regional disparities: patterns of migration from a comparative perspective; The role of human mobility dealing with violence and conflicts; Rethinking the migrations – security nexus: actors, practices, knowledges; Refugee reception and the importance of the local.*

<sup>3</sup> Session *Ethnonationalism and exclusion around the World* planned at AAG Annual Meeting in Denver (2020).