

The EU after November 13th: European voices raised in a harsh reaction on migration.



Paris changes everything? From Hungary to Poland European leaders have shown harsh reactions after the Paris attacks.

Despite the request from Jean Claude Juncker to draw a clear line to distinguish migrants from terrorists voices from Central and eastern Europe have been raised. Not only the well

known “dictator” Orban as Juncker previously called him, but also Poland and Slovakia have taken the chance of the Paris attacks to reaffirm their strong criticism over the relocation measures proposed by the European Council in the last months.

Nevertheless criticism didn't come only from the well known "bad pupils from the east" like Hungary Poland and Slovakia as Bavarian Allies of Angela Merkel stated that the “open door” refugee policy has to be reserved, using **Horst Seehofer** (Bavarian State Premier) “The days of uncontrolled immigration and illegal entry can't continue just like that. Paris changes everything”.

Shortly after also the Merkel's sister Party itself, Christian Social Union (CSU) called for stricter controls at Europe's external borders. *“The CSU stands behind the chancellor, but it would be good if Angela Merkel acknowledged that the opening of the border for an unlimited period of time was a mistake,”* **Markus Soeder** added.

The tragedies in Paris have been cited as a need for tougher measures to control the influx of migrants.

The first to express his opposition to open migration policies has been Hungary's prime minister **Victor Orban** who reacted shortly after the attacks with an interview appeared on Politico Europe on the 16th of November when the mourning for the victims were still on the mouth of European leaders. The Hungarian broke the news stating that “Of course it's not accepted, but the factual point is that all the terrorists are basically migrants. The question is when they migrated to the European Union.” during the interview Orban took the chance to outline his own definition of the European public space and to formulate his own prescription for Europe: An impenetrable external border to boost security and save the Schengen treaty on passport-less travel within the EU; a new EU constitutional convention that strengthens the power of nation states and weakens Brussels; and normalized relations with Russia. But the leader of the Fidesz didn't stop there, for him there is an "overwhelming logical connection between terrorism and the movement of Muslims into Europe". in his opinion in

fact not only Muslim are dangerous as migrants and potential threat to security, but moreover he underlined that the number one job after Paris is to "defend the borders and to control who is coming in." NATO and EU countries are "at war" with Islamists in the Middle East and Afghanistan, and, he said, "it's quite logical" that "enemies" would seek to send fighters with migrants coming into Europe.

The position is quite striking if we try to relate it with the debate going on radicalisation and on the growing and worrying trend of Foreign fighters who are undertaking the exact opposite journey from Europe to Syria whether they are second generation migrants or westerners converted to Islam.

Orban refers to an idea of parallel societies to which Muslim migrants belong holding EU passports but rejecting EU western values. If the issue is quite clearly outlined by the leader then the solution proposed shifts completely to a different domain, in fact, the best way to save "European liberties" is to apply a hard line policy on borders which are at the moment imperilled.

In response to the migrant crisis, Hungary under Mr. Orban erected border fences on its southern borders to stop people from crossing the country's border. The Hungarian prime minister defended this much-criticized decision.

"What is humane? Closing the borders to illegal invaders or risking the lives of innocent Europeans?" Mr. Orban said.

The impression we get from the debate is that of a clear shift in the discussion **from how to best accommodate the refugees to one of how to stop them from coming at all**, and ,in this context, **the events of November 13th have done nothing but exacerbating the already unstable debate over migration and asylum policy in the Union.**

Nevertheless Hungary is not the only country where the Paris attacks have been used to step back on asylum policies, After the attacks that rocked Paris, **Poland's** incoming minister in charge of Foreign affairs **Witold Waszczykowski** said the country would likely backtrack on an earlier pledge, made by the former government, to accept nearly 7,000 people under the resettlement plan. The right-leaning Law and Justice party, which took over power in Poland in mid November, had strongly opposed the plan.

"The European Council's decisions, which we criticised, on the relocation of refugees and immigrants to all EU countries are part of European law," but "after the tragic events of Paris we do not see the political possibility of respecting them," **Konrad Szymanski**, the Polish minister for European Affairs wrote on right-leaning website wPolityce.pl.

The new government, formed in early November by the conservative Law and Justice (PiS) party, appears to have reversed the Polish position. this statement was later shared by Prime Minister Mrs Szydlo who underlined that "In our view, we are not prepared to accept those quotas of refugees."

Meanwhile Mrs Szydlo risked provoking more divisions with the EU when journalists gathered for her press conference yesterday discovered the blue and gold star-studded European Union

flag was not on display, only the red and white Polish one.

The new Polish government, which won the election after eight years in opposition supports the country's EU membership but is Eurosceptic and desires greater independence from Brussels.

Asked about the missing flag, **Mrs Szydlo** said: 'We're an active EU member... but we adopted the approach that statements after government meetings will take place against a backdrop of the most beautiful ... white-and-red flag.'

'We're going to pursue a policy that, while appreciating our EU membership, secures maximum benefit for our Polish citizens, for Poland's economy and for our homeland.

'I'm very happy that in today's difficult times we are members of the EU and NATO.'

Slovak Prime Minister **Robert Fico**, who said earlier this year that Slovakia is only to receive refugees as long as they are Christian, said Monday Muslim migrants were a potential threat. the country has already announced its plan to challenge the quota regime in court.

"We are working with two versions of the attack - radicalisation of the Muslim parts of population of France as retaliation for France's involvement in air strikes against ISIS, or infiltration of ISIS into the current migration waves," he told journalists after chairing an emergency meeting of his country's national security council.

"We have been saying that there are enormous security risks linked to migration. Hopefully, some people will open their eyes now," Fico said.

But his words didn't stop at it as the Prime minister directly referred to Muslims by saying that: "We are monitoring every Muslim in our territory," after observing a minute's silence outside his country's French embassy. "We have increased monitoring of a refugee camp and detention camps, as well as monitoring of far-right extremists."

Earlier that day the PM had claimed "virtually every time there has been a terrorist attack [in Europe] representatives of the Muslims were responsible".

To this regard it is valuable to take a look on the other side of this "ideological fence" which has been constructed in the European debate.

During a conference held in Brussels on December 6th by the **European Muslim Network** on the **Fouad Imarraine** (Representative for the European Muslim Network in France) took the chance to give a clear answer to a crucial question: after the Paris attacks do the refugees represent a real danger? absolutely not.

During the event **Tariq Ramadan** (President of the European Muslim Network) lead the discussion over the stigmatization of Refugees, targeted as Muslims in particular, underlining that the criticism we are facing at the moment has to be inevitably linked to the **lack of a European identity** and a lack of a common migration policy. Perspectives and lenses by which we see the world change over time, if we look back at the 80s Osama Bin Laden was presented to us as a friend of democracy in Afghanistan. Words are powerful, we have to learn and teach the difference between refugees and migrants, Muslims and terrorists.

If it is impossible to deny that Islamic State members are Muslims, we have nevertheless the duty to speak up and to denounce their actions not only as members of the Muslim community but as Europeans and human beings. "We" are part of a large and complex

community the European one, we have to advocate our right to belong to it and our duty to defend its values.

Moreover it is fundamental to remember that IS members are not only European citizens, as previously said, but also youngsters who approached Islam not more than two months before joining this extremist branch.

In conclusion, we can say that, once again, the refugee crisis is in the debate, but not in the right terms. We are still waiting for a strong European answer to the refugee crisis which has to be delivered not only in policy terms but also in political terms by a strong and common European voice.

While we are writing the final words of this article the first drafts for a holistic approach to migration are coming to light in order to be discussed later this year in April together with reports of pilot case studies of Hotspots in Italy and Greece. Using the words that Massimo d'Alema (Former Italian Prime Minister and President of the Foundation for European Progressive Studies) addressed to the public of the EMN we can't reduce migration policies to a security matter, we have to accomplish the goal of constructing a European culture, based on the principles of solidarity and respect which are deeply rooted in the Muslim community, a community that has to be recognized as an integral part of modern Europe.

Lisa Vallese

For further information

Hungary to challenge refugee quotas in EU court

<https://euobserver.com/migration/131158>

Paris terror attacks: Jean Claude Juncker warns European leaders 'do not mix up terrorists with refugees'

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/paris-terror-attacks-jean-claude-juncker-warns-european-leaders-do-not-mix-up-terrorists-with-a6736271.html>

After Paris Attacks, Poland Says It Will No Longer Participate in EU's Refugee Plan

http://www.slate.com/blogs/the_slatest/2015/11/14/poland_says_it_will_resist_eu_refugee_plan_after_paris_attacks.html

Poland says it cannot accept migrants under EU quotas, following attacks in Paris

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/poland-plans-to-backtrack-on-migrant-commitment-following-attacks-in-paris-a6734521.html>

Poland Will Not Take Refugees Under EU Scheme After Paris Attacks, Minister Says

<http://europe.newsweek.com/paris-attacks-poland-336551>

Bavarian ally backs Merkel in row over refugee policy

<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-europe-migrants-germany-idUSKCN0T40FW20151115#78BM3f3HDAJm1Vb.97>

Europe's populist right targets migration after Paris attacks

<http://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-france-shooting-europe-migrants-idUKKCN0T30YI20151114>

'We are monitoring every Muslim' after Paris attacks, claims Slovakian PM

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/we-are-monitoring-every-muslim-after-paris-attacks-claims-slovakian-pm-a6737851.html>