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THE EUROPEAN UNION UNDER THE CONDITIONS OF THE MIGRATION CRISES: CONSEQUENCES FOR THE EVOLUTION OF THE IDENTITY OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

Russia's invasion of Ukraine sent another clear signal about rethinking and revising the EU's ability to play a significant role in internal and international policy. Despite significant progress in the field of defence (e.g. in the procurement and supply of military aid to Ukraine), the strategic unity and solidarity of the European Union have been called into question when confronted with both the reality of a real conflict outside the EU's borders, but also the influx of a wave of refugees from the area of full-scale conflict in Ukraine. How do these crises affect the EU's ability to influence the environment using *normative and soft power*, and what is the significance these crises for the identity of the community?

This paper is part of the analysis of a long-term process in which the role and, consequently, expectations regarding the specificity and activity of the EU in the changing international reality are interpreted. Hence, the authors of the paper propose the thesis that during the so-called European migration crisis of 2015–2016, there was a “normative gap” between EU Member States, which led to different bases for argumentation about the shape of EU migration policy (Bachleitnera, Bett, 2024). For the more general process of European integration, this generates a broader discourse on the importance of a common European identity for achieving normative consensus in areas that concern not only security and defence, but also migration and citizenship policies. An analysis will be presented of the extent to which the challenges related to the change in the international order, accelerated by the war in Ukraine, have affected the situation in Europe and the identity of the European Union itself in the face of new phenomena and processes, as well as the shape and effectiveness of the organisation's migration policy.

The methodology of this article is based on qualitative content analysis, encompassing primarily European Union documents such as treaties, directives, and strategic

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policy papers, as well as scholarly literature on the migration crisis and European identity. A comparative approach was employed to examine the responses of individual Member States to migration crises. Three case studies were analyzed: the migration crisis of 2015–2016, the crisis linked to the instrumentalization of migration by Belarus on the EU's eastern border, and the mass influx of refugees from Ukraine after 2022. The applied methodology aimed to highlight the differences in the interpretation and practice of the principle of solidarity, as well as to investigate the impact of successive migration crises on the evolution of the European Union's identity. The article also draws on theoretical frameworks related to the concept of European identity and the categories of soft power and normative power, which provide a broader understanding of the political and social dynamics within the EU.

1. THE IDENTITY OF THE EUROPEAN UNION IN THE PROCESS OF EVOLUTION

The concept of “European identity” appeared for the first time in the documents of the Council in Copenhagen in 1973, and then was limited by the symbolic slogans of freedom, democracy, the rule of law, solidarity and respect for human dignity. European identity is not a uniform concept, but a multi-layered narrative that is also relevant at national and local levels and includes horizontal elements such as language, religion and level of education. Although European identity was originally associated with the positive values of a common society, this concept gradually evolved into a defensive construction against foreign religious and cultural influences. The traditional concept of European society as a “liberal democracy” has recently been challenged by an alternative model of “illiberal democracy” promoted, for example, by political leaders in Hungary, Poland, Russia, Turkey and the USA. The original concept of the EU as a liberal democratic state has been challenged by the alternative model of “illiberal democracy” (Brug, Popa, Hobolt, Schmitt, 2021: 537–539).

The identity of the European Union, established since the 1960s, has been affected by serious structural challenges, including a burdensome decision-making process, a democratic deficit and too rapid growth in the number of members, and reinforced by migration crises. Since then, European identities have begun to be questioned publicly, while national identities have started to dominate again. The difficulties in deepening European identity are revealed in the difficult attempts to establish solidarity between Member States. However, instead of cooperative approaches to implement the EU's fundamental project, progress can often only be achieved through intergovernmental agreements with structures parallel to the EU level. The migration crisis has contributed to the growth of national identity as a threat to European identity. The future may be characterised by the following scenarios:

- the community idea will eventually prevail, perhaps with a limited number of members,
- the community idea will be lost and the European Union will become a “Europe of the Nations;”
- in the long term, there will be a merger of these extreme positions, as community

ideas will continue (Handler, 2018: 6). The third path is currently most likely to be a compromise.

One of the EU's most important courses of action demonstrating its capabilities in the international environment is its relations with its immediate neighbourhood, which, since the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty (TL), has been a priority objective of EU foreign policy. Undoubtedly, the security and prosperity of the EU depend to a large extent on the situation in the neighbouring countries, as exemplified by the ongoing conflict in Ukraine since 2014 (in full scale since 24 February 2022) or the already former wave of protests in Arab countries known as the Arab Spring (Zdanowski, 2011: 304, *passim*), including the migration crisis (Góra, 2019: 15–16).

Among the numerous *modus operandi*, the EU's instruments for influencing the external environment, as well as ensuring the protection of its borders, include foreign and security policy, as well as internal and migration policy. Recently, the deepening political and economic destabilization in the EU's neighbourhood has had an impact on the security and stability of its borders.

Hence, with the dynamic changes taking place both internally and in the international system, the European Union, in its established identity as a *soft, normative, civilian, democratisation and transformative power* especially in the face of the war in Ukraine, has today faced many challenges (Piskorska, 2023). In addition to the influx of refugees fleeing the threat to their lives as a result of the war, these include the need to strengthen Europe's defence and independence from Russian energy supplies. In the first case, the agenda has shifted towards issues where the EU has less capacity and is less able to reach agreements. In the second case, new challenges have arisen precisely in the subsector of EU energy policy, where delegation of powers to the EU is weaker (Piskorska, 2022).

In terms of the identity of the European Union in the area of security, the Russian invasion of Ukraine contributed to a change in focus from crisis management to territorial defence. This change has resulted in a poorly thought-out European security policy, as it has been developed over the last three decades, both in terms of capacity building and common understanding (Costa, Barbé, 2023: 431–446). Simon Duke found that the EU's capability initiatives “focus largely on expeditionary-type forces to stabilise surrounding regions and less on territorial defence” (Duke, 2019: 124), which led him to the conclusion that “the EU still has not defined “Defence” in the Common Security and Defence Policy” (Duke, 2019: 124). It is still widely believed that it remains out of reach, hence the European Union's constant assurances that NATO “remains the foundation of collective defence for its members.”

Also significant are the opinions of the former High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borrell, who in 2020 stated that “no one advocates the development of a fully autonomous European force outside NATO, which remains the only viable framework to ensure the territorial defence of Europe” (Borrell, 2020; Borrell 2024).

Calls for closer EU defence cooperation, the establishment of a “European strategic autonomy” or the creation of a true “European army” – are just some of the initiatives to provide a new impetus to the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). These were not just declarations, but specific actions and initiatives were undertaken.

In the summer of 2016, the European Union Global Strategy for Foreign and Security Policy (EUGS) was presented (*A Global Strategy...*, 2016), outlining the EU's foreign and security policy strategy – it was the first document of this type in thirteen years. In July 2016, a new EU-NATO Joint Declaration was announced with the intention of deepening cooperation in many common areas related to security and defence. As a first initial step towards the implementation of the EUGS, in November 2016, the Council adopted conclusions on its implementation in the area of security and defence, which were endorsed by the European Council at its December summit. As a result of these decisions, Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) was launched under the Treaty of Lisbon to conduct annual reviews and strengthen the EU Battlegroups. At the same time, the Commission presented a European Defence Action Plan to accelerate the financing of European defence objectives, resulting in the launch of the European Defence Fund in June 2017. Moreover, in June 2017, High Representative Federica Mogherini presented the future of European defence as part of the White Paper on the Future of Europe (Howorth, 2019).

Over the last decade, migration has again been at the top of the EU's list of priorities defining its identity and the specificity of its actions in international relations in response to growing challenges in this area. From the very beginning, the discourse at European level has focused on the need to "find a common way forward and avoid a 'Fortress Europe' mentality" and the recognition of the potential of legal migration in terms of benefits and cooperation with partners who have their own interests (Borrell, 2023). Migration has increasingly become a key element of the European Union's overall foreign policy, to which, according to Josep Borrell, the organisation needs a balanced approach that emphasises the idea of partnership (Borrell, 2023).

Hence, the question has arisen as to whether the European Union/Europe, based on a common history and an effectively practised tolerance of cultural differences, can become a cohesive community, or whether it is at risk of turning towards a supposed overcoming of antagonisms and nationalisms in the face of the emergence of a dominant problem area: the inevitable influx of refugees and asylum seekers. This doubt is the result not only of the migration wave itself, but also of populist incitement among Europeans (Handler, 2018: 2).

The EU immigration policy completely failed in 2015, and the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) for uniform standards in asylum procedures is still not functioning properly, as is the distribution system proposed by the European Commission. Immediate defensive measures to stop migrants proved insufficient and triggered uncontrolled reactions. German Chancellor Angela Merkel's gesture, seen as a humanitarian response to the problem, has caused friction across Europe and in transit countries, shifting the political spectrum from the centre to the right. At the European level, the attempts to strengthen the external borders remained insufficient. This has led to a loss of confidence in the policy and its ability to deal with migration problems, and provided nationalist populists with arguments to undermine both the prosperity and security of EU citizens (Handler, 2018: 3–4).

In this case, populism found a foothold, especially as two phenomena – globalisation and immigration – coincided, and the public became increasingly concerned that

governments were losing control of state affairs. Populist powers in their “soft” form still strive to redefine European identity, revealing the fragility of the values that are the foundation of the European community (Eichengreen, 2018: *passim*). The original motivation behind the European integration project was the desire to resolve conflicts on the continent not through war, but through negotiations. The expectation that the values enshrined in the Treaties of Rome would provide a solid and stable framework for the Community has been dispelled by internal (too rapid expansion of membership) and external (migration crisis) complexities, and national populists are taking advantage of the EU’s vulnerability to mass immigration from Africa and the Middle East, and currently from conflict-affected Ukraine.

2. “NORMATIVE GAP” IN MANAGING THE MIGRATION CRISIS IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

An analysis of the approach to the refugee crisis by selected Member States examines how political references to national historical experiences are a key source of limiting normative dissent among EU member states. Using the concept of EU “identity” as the main source of its normative power, it is possible to highlight cases of political interpretation of specific national identities and historical experiences within which they operate. Through this process, political elites draw on a source of normativity that cannot be provided by the vaguely shared European identity and historical experiences of the EU (Fligstein, Polyakova, Sandholtz, 2012).

The diverse responses identified by selected Member States to the refugee crisis in 2015 demonstrate that, despite the transfer of Member State sovereignty and autonomy to the European level, national experiences, narratives, and their current recourse to them continue to constitute an important source of normativity for EU Member States in the area of migration. The challenge is to identify the sources of variation in the way Member States engage in different types of self-determination and what this means for variation in the way they respond to refugees (Brumat, Freier, 2023).

The approach of Member States to immigration is different. Immigration is approached differently by the so-called “old” Member States, which have a much longer immigration tradition than the “new” Member States. While the first group of states can be characterised by pursuing a more liberal policy, open to immigration issues, the second group is characterised by more restrictive immigration policy and a reluctance to accept more immigrants. For the European Union to play an effective role as an active actor in the international arena, it must be internally coherent, i.e. EU policy should be supported by all Member States.

A striking example that showed, on the one hand, the challenges the European Union faces and, on the other hand, how internally diverse it is, was the migration crisis, which peaked in 2015–2016. At that time, more than 1.8 million people arrived illegally at the EU’s borders in 2015 (Statistics on migration to Europe, 2024). The migration pressure showed that not only did instruments related to migration and border management fail, but also highlighted the lack of solidarity and differences in responsibility between Member States towards the situation.

The European Union has taken specific actions to limit the inflow of immigrants to Europe, as well as to implement mechanisms of collective responsibility of Member States. Mechanisms such as resettlement, relocation and return of illegal immigrants have been introduced (Adamczyk, 2016: 47). In response to attempts at forced relocation of immigrants, some Member States resisted introducing the relocation mechanism. States opposing forced relocation included Poland, Slovakia and Hungary. Germany and the European Commission, on the other hand, lobbied for the adoption of the said solution.

The responses to the migration crisis were, to a large extent, determined by the prior experiences of individual states. The Visegrad Group countries, which opposed the admission of immigrants, explained their stance by referring to the absence of historical contact with Islamic culture and, in certain cases, to negative experiences with national minorities. The political discourse promoted by ruling elites was primarily framed around the perception of external threats and fears associated with the influx of migrants from Africa and the Middle East.

A notable example is the tightening of migration policy in Hungary under Viktor Orbán. According to his position, the introduction of more restrictive regulations was intended to safeguard both Hungary and the European Union from mass migration in the future. In his rhetoric, Orbán consistently underlined what he regarded as a strong correlation between migration, terrorism, increasing crime rates, and unemployment. Consequently, in his public addresses he repeatedly emphasized the notion that "Hungary is a country for Hungarians" (Pietrzak, 2020: 370). It should also be recalled that during the crisis Hungary undertook the construction of a barbed-wire fence along the Hungarian-Serbian border, a measure that was met with criticism from the European Union. Furthermore, the Hungarian government decided to close the border with Croatia. A comparable position was adopted in Slovakia by Robert Fico, who associated migration with the threat of terrorism. In his narrative, it was stressed that his party, Smer-SD, was capable of ensuring the protection of Slovakia from the consequences of migration, particularly from migrants of Islamic faith. In Poland as well, the migration crisis gave rise to an intensified public debate. The issue was incorporated into political discourse and extensively utilized during the parliamentary election campaign, which significantly influenced public attitudes towards immigrants. The parliamentary and presidential elections of 2015 marked a turning point in the approach to the European Commission's proposed measures for addressing the migration crisis. The newly formed government of Beata Szydło rejected the automatic relocation mechanism for migrants, emphasizing the primacy of safeguarding the security of Polish citizens. Consequently, Poland did not admit any immigrants within the framework of the relocation system (Tutak, 2018: 474–475).

The situation revealed several factors that called into question the unity of the European Union at that time. Firstly, the migration crisis of 2015–2016 showed that, despite the developed common immigration and asylum policy, in the face of migration pressure, response and cooperation mechanisms failed or were insufficient. Secondly, the division between the "old" and "new" Member States on immigration has become apparent. In the context of the migration crisis, two groups of states in the EU can be identified. The first group will include states that believed that the problem should be

perceived as a security threat, e.g. Poland and Hungary. The second category of states, treating the migration crisis as a challenge, includes Germany, the Nordic States of the EU (Potyrała, 2016: 301). Different approaches, determined the attitude towards the solutions proposed by the European Commission to solve the crisis. It was also a factor that, in the governments' rhetoric, was an element of blaming each other for the occurrence and intensification of migration pressure. The migration pressure was also causing increased polarisation at the level of societies, divisions and tensions increased, which consequently led to increased support for Eurosceptic and nationalist parties and Islamophobic attitudes (Lesiewicz, 2016: 179).

Thirdly, the migration crisis showed that the EU's activity in the international arena was insufficient, and actions under the European Neighbourhood Policy turned out to be ineffective (Stępniewski, 2015: 242). The fourth argument pointing to the internal problems of the EU was the problem of solidarity during the migration crisis. Despite the treaty provisions pointing to the principle of solidarity, Member States, especially those from Central and Eastern Europe, focused on their own approach to the then ongoing migration crisis. To limit the effects of the influx of immigrants to Europe, the EU held talks with third countries. An example of cooperation in resolving the situation and limiting migration movements to the EU was the agreement between the European Union and Turkey signed on 18 March 2016. However, the principle of solidarity, which was originally intended to unite the member states, in the context of the migration crisis led to political divisions regarding the methods of addressing it. It thus became one of the main sources of internal conflicts and a factor undermining mutual trust among the states. The migration crisis of 2015–2016, however, demonstrated that this principle can be interpreted in diverse ways. On the one hand, it was understood as collective action aimed at addressing common challenges, including the fair sharing of costs or the acceptance of specific quotas of migrants. On the other hand, a tendency towards the instrumental treatment of solidarity became apparent. The countries of Central and Eastern Europe argued that they implemented solidarity differently – through the protection of external borders, the provision of humanitarian and financial assistance, or support for refugee camps in third countries. Such divergent interpretations of the principle of solidarity deepened divisions and polarization with regard to visions of migration governance within the European Union.

Less than five years after the migration crisis of 2015–2016, further challenges have emerged, related to migration movements that significantly determine security within the European Union, i.e. instrumental use of immigrants on the Polish-Belarusian border, as well as forced migration related to the full-scale war in Ukraine. Both examples have renewed the discussion on migration and the threats related to it.

The migration pressure on the external border of the European Union in the border section with Belarus has become an example of hybrid action, where immigrants have become an instrument used for political pressure. It primarily affected states such as Poland, Lithuania and Latvia. The situation on the border was the result of Operation "Sluice," carried out by Belarus with the support of the Russian Federation. Artificially created migration pressure may lead to the restriction of one of the EU's key freedoms, and the mere instrumental use of migrants undermines the international legal order in the area of refugee protection. It also provides an opportunity for disinformation and

manipulation of public opinion and escalation of violence at the border (Łubiński, 2022: 44). The resulting situation has shown that another challenge facing the European Union is the hybridity of threats, and the solutions and instruments introduced by the EU for migration management in the face of new threats are insufficient.

An example of the will to act together in this area was the letter sent on 7 October 2021 by the 12 Ministers of the Interior or the Ministers in charge of Migration of the Member States to Margaritis Schinas, Vice-President of the European Commission, and Ylva Johansson, Commissioner for Home Affairs, requesting the preparation of solutions aimed at instruments to prevent hybrid threats. The situation has also triggered a process of proposals to amend the Schengen Borders Code. On 14 December 2021, the European Commission presented a draft regulation, and only on 6 February 2024 did the Council Presidency and the European Parliament reach a preliminary agreement on the final version of the act. There is a consensus among Member States on how to approach the issue of instrumentalisation of migration and hybrid action, which is undoubtedly important in the case of the Russian Federation's actions aimed at internal destabilisation of the EU. This consensus also becomes relevant in the context of the ongoing war in Ukraine.

3. NAVIGATING THE MIGRATION CRISIS IN THE EUROPEAN UNION IN PRACTICE

The ongoing war in Ukraine creates a renewed opportunity for Member States to cooperate on the security dimension, but also on the system of assistance provided to refugees. An example of action that was taken in the EU to avoid the overload resulting from the sudden influx of war refugees into individual Member States was the application of the Directive on minimum standards for giving temporary protection in the event of a mass influx of displaced persons (Council Directive 2001/55/EC...).

Although the directive was already introduced into the EU legal order in 2001, it was only as a result of the situation in Ukraine that it was implemented by the Council decision of 4 March 2022. The response of the EU and Member States was different than to the migration crisis of 2015–2016. It was a signal to Ukrainian citizens that they were welcome across the EU, influencing a bottom-up relocation of refugees from countries that were directly marked by the mass immigration of war refugees from Ukraine to other Member States (Szymańska, 2024: 120). It is worth noting that the opening of Member States to Ukrainian citizens was easier due to cultural and geographical proximity to the countries of the region. Moreover, the war situation concerns a country that is situated on the same continent, in the immediate vicinity of the EU. Thanks to the application of the EU Temporary Protection Directive, the problem of a solidarity mechanism, which could revive divisions within the Community, was avoided (Szymańska, 2024: 124). The Russian invasion of Ukraine is an attempt to forcibly divide Europe into spheres of influence (Dunaj, 2023: 74). The practice turned out to be different. Although the Member States condemn Russia's actions in a more or less balanced way, it must be said that, together with the European Union as an organisation, they are determined to stand together against Russian aggression in Ukraine.

In the case of the mass war-related migration from Ukraine, the principle of solidarity – so fundamental from the perspective of the EU's identity – was expressed in an entirely different manner than during the years 2015–2016. The European Union adopted a framework based on voluntary, bottom-up solidarity, financially supported but without the imposition of a quota-based relocation mechanism. This arrangement was possible for several reasons. First, these measures concerned Europeans – citizens of a state directly bordering the Union. Second, the negative historical experiences associated with Russia's policies towards individual EU member states translated into a strong social and political response, encouraging assistance and solidarity with Ukrainian citizens. Third, refugees from Ukraine were not perceived as a threat, particularly in terms of terrorism, even in countries pursuing restrictive migration policies. Fourth, geographic and cultural proximity contributed to the perception that they did not represent a potential cultural threat to the societies of EU member states.

The Pact on Migration and Asylum, which is currently being finalised by the EU, may once again become an element that will bring back different positions related to migration management. Although the proposed changes are an aftermath of the 2015–2016 migration crisis, as well as a response to emerging hybrid threats using migration, individual solutions raise objections from individual Member States. This is about a solidarity mechanism allowing at least 30,000 people per year to be relocated from Member States under increased migration pressure to others. A State that does not want to accept migrants will pay €20,000 per person into a solidarity fund. The introduction of a solidarity mechanism is largely opted for by Italy. It is worth noting that Poland and Hungary oppose the introduction of such a solution. Poland points out that the new regulations do not take into account the situation on the Polish-Belarusian border, as well as the assistance it has provided to war refugees from Ukraine. The Pact on Migration and Asylum can become a further step towards building the EU's migration and asylum policy, which will also take into account, to some extent, the demands of the Member States. Undoubtedly, the EU's migration and asylum policy in the era of globalisation and intensification of migration movements may be a factor that will intensify, or even reduce, the sense of belonging to a community such as the EU.

CONCLUSIONS

The European Union is facing crisis situations that result in discussions about the future, including the credibility of its identity and ability to act. The EU's inefficiency in certain areas is then pointed out, for example, migration policy. As Paweł J. Borkowski points out, from inefficiency is a short way to questioning the sense of the EU's existence, while the primary source of its legitimacy is precisely the aforementioned efficiency (Borkowski, 2015/2016: 183).

In recent years, the European Union has experienced several events that have, on the one hand, divided Member States as to how the EU should deal with problems, and on the other hand, situations that have been characterised by solidarity. The migration crisis of 2015–2016 showed how fragile EU solidarity between states is, which also

conditioned the perception of the European Union in the world as a strong and resilient actor in the face of today's challenges.

The experiences of migration crises have shown that the principle of solidarity may be interpreted selectively, instrumentally, or differently depending on the perspective of individual Member States. Although the origins of each crisis were distinct, the past decade has revealed two antagonistic approaches to the idea of solidarity. On the one hand, a fragmentary and selective form of solidarity has emerged, indicating that, instead of a genuinely common approach to migration governance, national interests tend to dominate in practice. On the other hand, in the face of the mass war-related migration from Ukraine, a model of solidarity of an unprecedented nature has emerged – both at the grassroots societal level and at the institutional level within the Union.

These two approaches demonstrate that, despite efforts to harmonise migration law and to pursue a common migration and asylum policy, such frameworks are not fully universal. Their shape is largely determined by geopolitical, cultural, and social conditions. This is further evidenced by the divergent positions of Member States towards the solutions included in the Pact on Migration and Asylum. The absence of full consensus on solidarity mechanisms undermines the legitimacy of the EU as a community of values and weakens its credibility as a “normative power” capable of shaping an order based on human rights and solidarity – both within the Union and beyond its borders. This represents a pessimistic scenario, suggesting that in the face of new challenges, threats, and migration crises, further erosion of the values underpinning European integration may occur.

Given the apparent normative divide within the EU in the area of migration, the claim is confirmed that Member States, in areas that affect their identity, refer to diverse national identities that cement different normative horizons regarding what a common European direction of action should look like.

The above analysis would not be complete without an attempt to identify future threats afor the EU identity in the context of current and future migration flows. The migration processes experienced by Europe in the 21st century present both opportunities (e.g., strengthening diversity, demographic replenishment, economic development) and threats to the normative identity of the EU, especially if migration management is not aligned with normative values or is subject to political, social, or economic pressures. The dominant threat at the level of the political system of nation states and the European Union as a whole is undoubtedly the tendency towards intensified pressure from populist parties and social movements that are gaining strength and increasingly using the issue of migration to polarize society. In addition, a very disturbing phenomenon undermining the normative cohesion of the EU is the rise of skepticism towards immigration and, consequently, the risk of its instrumental use as an element of foreign policy or hybrid actions (e.g., third countries directing migrants towards the EU's borders).

These factors will continue to cause key problems with the uniform management of the migration process at the European level, including effective border protection, the return of migrants, and the simplification of procedures, which may entail the risk of human rights violations through the automation of decisions. The complexity of the

issue is exacerbated by objective factors, including the scale of the impact of migratory pressure, particularly in countries bordering the EU which, like Poland on the border with Belarus, expect support from the EU. Finally, the lack of an effective policy for integrating migrants into the host country can lead to social exclusion and cultural separation. On the other hand, this gives rise to social reactions, such as fears that migrants pose a threat to jobs, social systems, or traditional cultural norms, which in turn affects the consensus on EU normative values.

Among the possible recommendations for the EU's identity, the most rational, albeit difficult to achieve, perspective seems to be to strengthen mechanisms of financial, logistical, and social solidarity so that EU border countries such as Poland are not left to fend for themselves. At the level of decision-making procedures, it is desirable to strengthen transparent and fair migration and asylum procedures, while respecting human rights, and to combat disinformation and narratives of fear. It is necessary to build public awareness, emphasizing that migration is multidimensional and that migrants are not only a burden but also a potential. However, this requires commitments at the level of the legal and institutional systems of the Member States, including greater adaptability of legal systems, treaties, and internal regulations to new types of migration, such as climate migration, but also the development of EU law in this area. Many European law experts recommend reforming Article 80 TFEU (Treaty on the Functioning of the EU) to clarify that solidarity is mandatory and not just a general principle supplemented by enforcement procedures (Ceccorulli, 2021). However, nothing can replace preventive measures in the form of attempts to address the causes of migration worldwide, including conflicts, poverty, and environmental degradation. This is a key challenge for the legal framework, asylum mechanisms, preparedness, and normative coherence of the EU. In conclusion, a normative political compromise will only be achieved when security and border control become a priority on a par with respect for human rights standards.

To sum up, it should be noted that, the existing hybrid threats using migration, as well as the war in Ukraine, result in actions to counter the instrumentalisation of migration and to assist forced migrants, thus causing the European Union to have a common goal. This is a situation that the European Union may use to strengthen its actions in the international arena using *soft power*, and on the other hand, effectively implement the principle of solidarity while building a community identity. It should be borne in mind that there is still a strong sense of problem-solving at the national level in the EU, which may hamper and prolong the aforementioned processes. Although the identity of the EU as a community is still evolving, it can be said that it has become more defensive in the face of external and internal threats.

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this paper is to analyse the consequences of the migration crises that occurred in 2015–2016 and as a result of the war in Ukraine and their significance for the identity of the European Union. The analysis pays attention to the concept of “European identity” and its evolution in the conditions of changing international reality, as well as to the migration crises that have affected Europe in recent years, and therefore the European Union itself. The thesis is proposed that during the so-called European migration crisis of 2015–2016 and 2022–2024, there was a “normative gap” between EU Member States, which led to different bases for argumentation about the shape of EU migration policy. Moreover, the paper answers the question – how do these crises affect the EU's ability to influence the environment using *normative and soft power*, and what is the significance these crises for the identity of the community? It was found that the identity of the EU is still evolving, and that as a result of the migration crises its character has become more defensive. At the same time, in the Eu-

ropean Union member states there is still a strong belief that problems, including migration problems, can be solved more effectively not so much at the EU level but rather at the level of nation states.

Keywords: European Union, migration crisis, normative identity, European identity, solidarity

UNIA EUROPEJSKA W WARUNKACH KRYZYSÓW MIGRACYJNYCH. KONSEKWENCJE DLA EWOLUCJI TOŻSAMOŚCI UNII EUROPEJSKIEJ

STRESZCZENIE

Celem artykułu jest analiza konsekwencji kryzysów migracyjnych, jakie miały miejsce w latach 2015–2016 oraz w wyniku wojny w Ukrainie i ich znaczenia dla tożsamości Unii Europejskiej. W analizie zwrócono uwagę na pojęcie “tożsamości europejskiej” i jej ewolucję w warunkach zmieniającej się rzeczywistości międzynarodowej oraz na kryzysy migracyjne, które w ostatnich latach dotknęły Europę, co za tym idzie samą Unię Europejską. Postawiono tezę, że podczas tak zwanego europejskiego kryzysu migracyjnego w latach 2015–2016 oraz 2022–2024 pojawił się “normatywny rozdzięk” między państwami członkowskimi UE, co doprowadziło do różnych podstaw argumentacji o kształcie polityki migracyjnej UE. Ponadto artykuł odpowiada na pytanie jak owe kryzysy wpływają na zdolność Unii Europejskiej do oddziaływania na otoczenie za pomocą *normative i soft power*, a także jakie znaczenie dla samej tożsamości wspólnoty mają owe kryzysy? Stwierdzono, że tożsamość UE wciąż ewoluje, a w wyniku zaistniałych kryzysów migracyjnych jej charakter przybrał bardziej charakter defensywny. Jednocześnie w państwach członkowskich Unii Europejskiej wciąż jest silne przekonanie o bardziej skutecznym rozwiązywaniu problemów, również migracyjnych, nie tyle na poziomie unijnym a raczej na poziomie państw narodowych.

Słowa kluczowe: Unia Europejska, kryzys migracyjny, tożsamość normatywna, tożsamość europejska, solidarność