

## SOROS' MIGRATION PLAN – A MYTH OR REALITY?

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The author of this contribution attempts to objectively describe and assess the so-called Soros Migration Plan. It is a rather imprecise concept, mostly used by the media and politicians, attributed to a set of statements, publicised by American investor George Soros. His opinions were released as a reaction to the refugee (migration) crisis in Europe culminating in 2015 – 2016, but present until now. Since their publication, Soros' views attracted the attention of policymakers, scholars, non-governmental organisations and, especially, the media which labelled them as his migration plan. However, only a few persons studied these theses in more depth. Not only for this reason, the plan is interpreted very differently as either a strategy to destroy the original European culture, a remedy for the entire migration crisis, a well-intentioned, but amateurish solution out of the persisting problems, or its existence is totally denied. What are the facts about Soros' Migration Plan?

*Key words:* immigration, refugees, Europe, Soros, migration plan

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## INTRODUCTION

The year 2015 brought to Europe a multitude of various economic, political, social, environmental and other challenges. But a chain of unexpected events related to development in the field of migration<sup>1</sup> showed to be the most critical and considerably impacting the above-mentioned areas too. Through its sudden outburst, great intensity, large-scale character, daily human tragedies, political hesitations to failures

1 In an international context – contrary to the Slovak one – the shortened term “migration” is understood as a full equivalent to the term “international migration” (Divinský, 2005: 17). Analogically for “international migrants” and “migrants”. Migration as such then is, within the EU context, perceived as the action by which a person establishes (or ceases to have) his/her usual residence in a Member State for a period that is, or is expected to be, at least 12 months (EC, 2014: 190).

and other far-reaching implications, the refugee<sup>2</sup> crisis<sup>3</sup> in 2015 found political representations, intellectual elites, respective stakeholders, the media as well as native populations in the European Union<sup>4</sup> fairly unprepared to produce quick, energetic, deliberate, comprehensive, and humane solutions.

Though already prior to 2015 EU officials presented the first initiatives/plans to tackle negative aspects of existing migration trends – then especially in the Mediterranean, the year 2015 came with further escalations of violence in the Syrian Civil War. This resulted in several huge waves of emigrants from Syria, accompanied by other nationalities from Middle East (later also from North Africa), heading via Turkey for Europe – the Balkans and Central Europe. The media informed about the situation on a daily basis, but most often in a tabloid-like manner, incompetently or even with prejudices.

Besides official institutional responses, many individuals aired their personal views on the issue too. One of them was American businessman and financier of Hungarian origin George Soros. He outlined possible solutions to the (European) migration crisis repeatedly, in modified versions during 2015 – 2016. As G. Soros has been a well-known person in an international, not only economic, framework for a long time, a set of his opinions and recommendations – soon branded Soros' Migration Plan – naturally drew the attention of other actors in the field. Nevertheless, it seems that the absolute majority of them – be they politicians, journalists, researchers, state institutions, non-governmental organisations or international institutions – did not read up on the plan or only its core theses well (if at all). That is why Soros' Migration Plan is generally misinterpreted to largely distorted or even denied. It is done so by various persons, institutions or media with the intent to promote their particular – not seldom antagonistic – goals, policies and ideologies, or from pure ignorance.

## COURSE OF THE MIGRATION CRISIS IN BRIEF

Although most of the key stakeholders in the area of migration along with the public describe the events pertaining to mass inflows of refugees/migrants in 2015 to be extremely sudden, unpredictable and unpreventable, it is not quite like that. Development in the numbers of irregular migrants apprehended at borders (i.e. not overstayers<sup>5</sup>) as well as of asylum applicants clearly suggested an incoming change already earlier.

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- 2 In this contribution, I will use the terms “refugee crisis” and “migration crisis” as loose synonyms, though usually “refugees” and “asylum seekers” are understood as categories within forced migration (IOM, 2011: 39; EC, 2014: 131) that has always been a component of overall migration. However, some recent approaches tend to place the asylum seekers/refugees and the migrants on an equal level for practical and political reasons.
  - 3 The concept of a “migration crisis” means a “crisis with migration consequences”, i.e. large-scale, complex migration flows due to a crisis, which typically involves significant vulnerabilities for individuals and communities affected. A migration crisis may be sudden or slow in onset, can have natural or man-made causes, and can take place internally or across borders (IOM, 2012; compare Lindley, 2014).
  - 4 The political-geographical units – Europe and the European Union – may be often purposely intermingled in this contribution as immigrants in most cases do not explicitly differ between both territories as targets of their movement. Likewise, the EU often symbolises the whole continent as it has been affected by immigrant waves to a maximum degree.
  - 5 Migrants in an irregular situation who remained in a country beyond the period for which entry was granted (IOM, 2011: 70; see also EC, 2014: 208).

An upward trend in the number of undocumented migrants<sup>6</sup> began to manifest itself in 2013, but primarily since 2014 (dramatic inter-annual growth of 2.6 times – calculated by Frontex, 2010 – 2017). Similarly, after a decade of relative quantitative stabilisation or even decline, the number of persons seeking asylum in the EU countries already sharply rose in 2013 – 2014 (Eurostat data<sup>7</sup>). It may be stressed that right in 2013 Germany became, for the first time since 1999, the biggest recipient of asylum claims among the group of industrialised countries in the world (UNHCR, 2014); likewise in 2014. In other words, migration trends in 2013 – 2014 were good prerequisites to expect large migration inflows to Europe/the EU in the next years.

The above-mentioned acceleration of migratory movements was a natural consequence of developments in Middle East and North Africa (see also Samers, Collyer, 2017; Lindley, 2014). Among the crucial factors belonged notably: the expansion of the Syrian Civil War<sup>8</sup>, repeated peace plan failures, the battle engagement and successes of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), the partial withdrawal of US troops and continuing attacks by Taliban in Afghanistan, instability in Libya, and increasing concurrent waves of economic migration. As most of the migrants tried to reach the Union through the Mediterranean in a disorderly manner, the European Commission with the Italian government launched a year-long naval and air operation called Mare Nostrum to search for and rescue irregular migrants on the open sea in October 2013. Little willingness to share the funding burden led to its termination and to the following, but rather limited Operation Triton conducted by Frontex since November 2014 to protect EU external borders.

In this period too, top EU authorities took a series of strategic, legal and institutional measures, among others constant improvements in the protection of Schengen external borders, the opening of the European Asylum Support Office (2011)<sup>9</sup> and subsequent steps in building the Common European Asylum System, the adoption of the new Joint EU Resettlement Programme (2012)<sup>10</sup>, the enactment of Dublin III (2013)<sup>11</sup>, the adoption of the EUROSUR system (2013)<sup>12</sup>, the Fourth Euro-African Conference on Migration and Development (2014)<sup>13</sup>, discussions at the 1<sup>st</sup> meeting of the European Migration Forum (beginning of 2015)<sup>14</sup>, etc.

Nonetheless, these and other activities to improve the migration management in the European Union and principally to reduce unfavourable impacts of irregular and

6 More exactly, in the number of illegal EU external border crossings according to the methodology of Frontex.

7 Compare more in detail [http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=migr\\_asyctz&lang=enand](http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=migr_asyctz&lang=enand) [http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=migr\\_asyappctza&lang=en](http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=migr_asyappctza&lang=en), retrieved July 7, 2017.

8 <https://prezi.com/avhh44i5f54b/syrian-civil-war-timeline/>, retrieved August 15, 2017.

9 <https://www.easo.europa.eu/>, retrieved July 8, 2017.

10 [https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-is-new/news/news/2012/20120329\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-is-new/news/news/2012/20120329_en), retrieved July 8, 2017.

11 Regulation (EU) No. 604/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013 establishing the criteria and mechanisms for determining the Member State responsible for examining an application for international protection lodged in one of the Member States by a third-country national or a stateless person (recast).

12 Regulation (EU) No. 1052/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 22 October 2013 establishing the European Border Surveillance System (EUROSUR).

13 <http://italia2014.eu/en/news/post/novembre/conferenza-ministeriale-euro-africana/>, retrieved July 10, 2017.

14 <http://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/sections-other-bodies/other/european-migration-forum>, retrieved July 12, 2017.

asylum migration from third countries were unable to avert the next events. Among the key factors that induced a previously hardly anticipated multiplication of both migratory routes and flows to Europe in 2015 belonged (see also Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2017; Samers, Collyer, 2017; Kingsley, 2016; EC et EMN, 2015):

- the culmination stage of the Syrian Civil War with rising war atrocities (the use of chemical weapons and rockets against civilians, the bombing of overcrowded hospitals and entire residential quarters etc.),
- stunning military victories of ISIL, their establishment of a caliphate on occupied territories and inconceivable brutality against various communities,
- the growing involvement of foreign powers in the war,
- the deteriorating overall situation in Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya,
- religious and ethnic conflicts in northern and central Africa,
- increasing environmental migration caused by famine, drought, deforestation (but also armed clashes) in the Horn of Africa,
- parallel enormous opportunistic economic/family migration, particularly from Middle East, southern Asia, northern and central Africa (according to me, the dominant migration component from most regions except for war zones in Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq and some smaller areas)<sup>15</sup>,
- well-organised and experienced networks of migrant smugglers.

In this context too, in the 1<sup>st</sup> half of 2015, the European Commission came with an important strategic document of a comprehensive character – European Agenda on Migration<sup>16</sup> – with the main objectives to strengthen the common asylum policy, to address the root causes behind irregular migration, to secure the EU external borders, and to dismantle smuggling and trafficking networks. However, it was too late. Right from the spring of 2015 the phrases “European refugee crisis” or “European migration crisis” have begun to be widely used (Johnson, 2015; Georgiou, Zaborowski, 2017) as the world media became awash with shocking, incredible to sorrowful stories and pictures relating to immense crowds of refugees/migrants wandering on the roads of the Balkans or central Europe and trying to break through various barriers, sailing across the Mediterranean Sea on hundreds of overcrowded and fragile leaking vessels often with whole families, dying on the way locked in lorries or getting drowned at sea – including very little children, and starving in makeshift ill-equipped tented camps while waiting for a verdict.

As a matter of fact, the cardinal feature of the migration crisis was formed by an unprecedented quantitative growth of migrants newly arriving to the territory of the European Union (Europe) in 2015. Indeed in that year, the total number of unauthorised EU border crossings detected by Frontex totalled an astronomic 1.8 million (Frontex, 2010 – 2017). It was almost 6.5 times the number in 2014 or 17.5 times that in 2010 (Table). The real number of persons having passed the EU external borders irregularly was, however, lower because a good part of them were registered in the Frontex

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15 See, for example, a statement by F. Timmermans – <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/six-out-of-10-migrants-to-europe-come-for-economic-reasons-and-are-not-refugees-eu-vice-president-a6836306.html>, retrieved July 21, 2017.

16 Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions – A European Agenda on Migration, COM (2015) 240 final of 13 May 2015.

database several times at different locations in the chaotic situation then. Owing to that, a more realistic figure of migrants coming to Europe in 2015 could be that given by International Organization for Migration (IOM, 2016 – 2017) – over 1 million (with monthly maxima between August and November), which was a fourfold increase compared to 2014. Trends in the area of asylum migration showed similar dynamics; the number of asylum applicants in the EU rose 2.1 times in 2014 – 2015 when calculating by Eurostat data (Table).

The described development resulted in efforts to handle the situation at the EU, national, NGO, IGO and other levels, carefully monitored by the European media and public. In the summer 2015, the Union launched a naval and air operation named Operation Sophia to curb activities of migrant smugglers and to rescue refugees, especially on the high seas off Libya.<sup>17</sup> Also, the Council approved a disputed plan (i.e. the quota system) to relocate 120,000 asylum seekers from Italy and Greece to the other EU countries.<sup>18</sup> Both the mentioned “front-line” states built up the networks of hot-spots for migrants, with 5 operating in Greece and 4 in Italy as of the summer 2017. Still in 2015, the Valletta Summit on Migration sought ways out of the migration crisis together with African leaders.<sup>19</sup> Then, in 2016, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (re-formed Frontex basically) was established as a major institution to better protect the EU external borders.<sup>20</sup> At the same time, significant measures in order to improve the Common European Asylum System, visa and return policies in the EU were taken. At the beginning of 2017, EU leaders met in Malta again to discuss comprehensive immigration policies and to curtail irregular migration to the Union.<sup>21</sup> Nevertheless, the decisive act with far-reaching implications was an EU-Turkey agreement aimed at stemming undocumented migration, concluded in 2016.<sup>22</sup> Though being partly controversial too, it substantially reduced the massive inflow of migrants to the EU (Bendel, 2017; OECD, 2017). As demonstrated in Table, the number of unauthorised border crossings quickly fell 3.6 times, that of arrivals 2.7 times, and that of asylum applicants by 5% in 2016 compared to 2015. The sharp downward trends in all observed migration components have obviously continued also in 2017.

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17 [https://eeas.europa.eu/csdp-missions-operations/eunavfor-med\\_en](https://eeas.europa.eu/csdp-missions-operations/eunavfor-med_en), retrieved July 21, 2017.

18 Council Decision (EU) 2015/1601 of 22 September 2015 establishing provisional measures in the area of international protection for the benefit of Italy and Greece.

19 <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/international-summit/2015/11/11-12/>, retrieved July 21, 2017.

20 <http://frontex.europa.eu/news/european-border-and-coast-guard-agency-launches-today-CHIYAp>, retrieved July 25, 2017.

21 <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/european-council/2017/02/03/>, retrieved July 25, 2017.

22 See more in detail the EU-Turkey Statement of 18 March 2016, <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2016/03/18/eu-turkey-statement/>, retrieved July 25, 2017.

**Table: Development in selected elementary indicators pertaining to migration flows to the European Union between 2010 and mid-2017 (end-year numbers in thousands of persons)**

Indicator / Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	mid-2017
Detected illegal border crossings <sup>a</sup>	104	141	72	107	283	1,822	511	116
Total arrivals <sup>b</sup>	-	-	-	-	260(est.)	1,047	388	102
Asylum seekers <sup>c</sup>	259	309	335	431	627	1,323	1,261	341
Legal immigrants <sup>d</sup>	1,509	1,451	1,397	1,442	1,631	2,417	na	na

Sources and notes:

a = Frontex (2010 – 2017), <http://frontex.europa.eu/news/arrival-of-migrants-in-june-numbers-rising-in-italy-and-spain-U2NSTL23>

The number of detections of unauthorised border crossings rather than the number of persons, as the same person could cross the external EU border illegally several times at different locations.

b = IOM (2016 – 2017), <http://migration.iom.int/europe/24>

The sum of arrivals of third-country nationals to Europe through the Mediterranean Sea and Balkans reported as migrants/asylum seekers.

c = Eurostat data<sup>25</sup>

The number of third-country nationals having lodged an application for international protection in the EU countries in a given year.

d = Eurostat data<sup>26</sup>

The sum of third-country nationals legally immigrated to the EU in a given year.

## SOROS' VIEWS ON THE ISSUE AND THEIR EVALUATION

The described dramatic developments in Europe and adjacent parts of Asia and Africa, especially their political, institutional, legal, administrative, economic, social, security impacts on majority societies at the EU, national (country), regional and other levels, naturally aroused the intense interest of many relevant stakeholders (e.g. governments, politicians, research community, non-governmental organisations, international organisations, churches), the media as well as the general public and non-professionals.

Among the individual persons – relatively largely and publicly reacting to problem points of the migration crisis – was also George Soros, the well-known American businessman and financier of Hungarian origin, founder of numerous human rights and educational institutions. This too was a reason why the opinions he had published drew the attention of other actors in the area of migration management not only in Europe. However, it seems that not too many people have read/studied/understood Soros' views on the crisis in a sufficient degree.

23 Retrieved September 22, 2017.

24 Retrieved September 22, 2017.

25 <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&language=en&pcode=tps00191&plugin=1>, retrieved August 10, 2017; <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&language=en&pcode=tps00189&plugin=1>, retrieved August 10, 2017.

26 [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/database?node\\_code=migr\\_imm1ctz](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/database?node_code=migr_imm1ctz), retrieved September 2, 2017.

For this reason too, in 2015 – 2017, I reviewed some 50 print media appearances and around 10 TV media reports on a daily basis. The media were of a heterogeneous character (mainstream, non-mainstream or conspiracy; regional, national or foreign; public or commercial ones). According to my media monitoring, I can state that Soros' proposals of how to deal with the migration crisis have been widely misapprehended or distorted. In this context, several categorical attitudes to Soros' Migration Plan (as labelled by the media; below also SMP for short) may be distinguished. SMP has been most usually regarded as:

- a dangerous plan, strategy or instrument to erode (even destroy) original European culture, civilisation, population structure, particular nations etc. This opinion is most spread among the far-right and anti-immigration parties, groups, media, individuals;
- the existence of SMP is hardly acknowledged, doubted or completely denied. Motives for this are varied: from efforts to prevent its criticism through disagreement with it to a simple lack of knowledge about it;
- a valuable tool for the entire migration crisis in the EU/Europe, accentuating specially the protection of irregular migrant/refugees. This approach is most often shared by pro-migration and/or far-left NGOs, activists, parties, media;
- one of the attempts intended to ameliorate the situation, made by a person concerned (though not an expert or policymaker). Such neutral, balanced evaluations of SMP are quite rare, informal, practically unpublished.

George Soros submitted his thoughts as a personal response to the European migration crisis to help overcome it. Therefore, SMP has been articulated in the form of recommendations and measures to be done. However, it was not a one-off act but rather a process under development: it was put out repeatedly, in several adapted versions within the period 2015 – 2016. Already in July 2015, G. Soros presented in the press his first partial and brief remarks on the EU's failure to properly and quickly handle incoming refugees and called for a better asylum system.<sup>27</sup>

Later in 2015 (September 26), George Soros released on his own website an essay named "Rebuilding the Asylum System".<sup>28</sup> This text has already been of a broader nature, addressing a complex of contemporaneous migration problems in the European Union. As the author claims, "the EU needs a comprehensive plan to respond to the crisis" and he drafts one such, wishing to be extended beyond the borders of Europe. The plan is composed of 6 components, in which G. Soros suggests taking the following principal measures (shortened):

1. "The EU has to accept at least a million asylum seekers annually for the foreseeable future. And, to do that, it must share the burden fairly."... "The EU should provide 15,000 (\$16,800) per asylum seeker for each of the first two years."
2. "The EU must lead the global effort to provide adequate funding to Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey to support the four million refugees currently living in those

27 Financial Times, July 26, 2015: <https://www.ft.com/content/b6108088-3212-11e5-91ac-a5e17d9b4cff>, retrieved September 4, 2017.

28 <https://www.georgesoros.com/2015/09/26/rebuilding-the-asylum-system/>, retrieved September 4, 2017.

countries.” ... “The EU would need to make an annual commitment to frontline countries of at least 8-10 billion.”

3. “The EU must immediately start building a single EU Asylum and Migration Agency and eventually a single EU Border Guard.”.....“The new agency would gradually streamline procedures; establish common rules for employment and entrepreneurship, as well as consistent benefits.”
4. “Safe channels must be established for asylum-seekers, starting with getting them from Greece and Italy to their destination countries.” ... “The next logical step is to extend safe avenues to the frontline region, thereby reducing the number of migrants who make the dangerous Mediterranean crossing.”
5. “The operational and financial arrangements developed by the EU should be used to establish global standards for the treatment of asylum seekers and migrants.”
6. “To absorb and integrate more than a million asylum seekers and migrants a year, the EU needs to mobilize the private sector – NGOs, church groups, and businesses – to act as sponsors.”

The aforementioned set of theses by Soros, presented in September 2015, can be informally deemed to be Soros’ Migration Plan I as is the earliest in a series. It predominantly covered the refugee crisis and asylum issues, though a few others were marginally also referred to. However, at the time of the summer/autumn 2015, these issues were already fully dealt with or at least intensively discussed by various official institutions and fora, chiefly by the highest authorities of the Union (as depicted in the previous chapter), UNHCR, IOM, some international NGOs, governments etc. As a result, SMP I did not mean a special added value to the topic. Moreover, the first component of the plan – stressing the necessity of accepting over one million refugees per year to the EU – became an extremely controversial point. This requirement was factually exaggerated, unrealistic and unsystematic particularly in a longer-term perspective. It also provoked panic up to total rejection among many (not only) anti-immigration subjects, including some national governments – a situation that has obviously persisted until now. The Hungarian government can be a notorious example of the strongest opponent of the above quota, SMP as a whole and Soros alone. During the period from 2015 onward, Budapest has constantly laid the blame on George Soros for supporting illegal migration and refugee crisis in Europe, attempts to dismantle EU nation states and abolish their borders, and for undermining European religious and cultural identity.<sup>29</sup>

In the spring of 2016 (April 10), G. Soros published on his website another article entitled “Bringing Europe’s Migration Crisis Under Control”.<sup>30</sup> The author here openly expresses his discontent over progress in crisis management achieved by the European Union. To him, EU’s policies implemented till that time had several fundamental shortcomings. For instance, he argues that the EU–Turkey agreement is not truly European and has been imposed on the EU by A. Merkel; migration measures by the

29 Just a few examples: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3297431/Hungarian-Prime-Minister-accuses-billionaire-investor-George-Soros-trying-undermine-Europe-supporting-refugees-travelling-Middle-East.html>; <http://hungarytoday.hu/news/pm-orban-accuses-george-soros-masterminding-american-lefts-pro-migration-stance-88835>; <http://www.breitbart.com/london/2017/10/10/soros-plan-satan-assault-europe/>, all retrieved October 11, 2017.

30 <https://www.georgesoros.com/2016/04/10/bringing-europes-migration-crisis-under-control/>, retrieved September 5, 2017.

Union are severely underfunded and; Greece has fallen in poor conditions as regards to the capacity of its asylum facilities. But Soros' most interesting reproach is that the EU asylum policy is not voluntary as "it establishes quotas that many member states oppose and requires refugees to take up residence in countries where they do not want to live".

George Soros in his article has also recommended that:

- the European Union within its comprehensive asylum policy should take 300,000-500,000 refugees annually;
- rules and procedures pertaining to asylum seekers should be amended and simplified in order to reduce the current chaos;
- the EU should finally create a common asylum agency and border force, address the humanitarian crisis in Greece, and establish common standards across the Union for receiving and integrating refugees;
- as this plan requires at least 30 billion a year, restrictive EU fiscal rules should be removed and new taxes levied. The existing EU financial instruments should secure the sufficient funding to cope with the migration crisis;
- the front-line states as Jordan, Turkey, and Greece should be provided with enough financial support and should not be obliged to repay the money they receive.

Because the word "plan" has been used in this essay by the author himself, the text can be named Soros' Migration Plan II. It differs from SMP I by two essential features. First, the number of asylum seekers from third countries that should be accepted, by Soros, in the territory of the European Union per year has sizeably decreased – 2 to 3 times. Very likely G. Soros has become conscious of the fact that the previously proposed figure of 1 million persons would be absolutely inappropriate in the present political, economic and social conditions in the EU, mainly from a long-term viewpoint. Second, SMP II has been overly focused on a wide range of financial issues at the expense of other significant migration factors. Likewise, the businessman warns in the conclusion: "It would be irresponsible to allow the EU to disintegrate for a lack of financing to bring the crisis under control."

Finally, George Soros wrote an article "This Is Europe's Last Chance to Fix Its Refugee Policy" in July 2016.<sup>31</sup> It was followed by another essay published on his website (on September 12, 2016) under the title "Saving Refugees to Save Europe".<sup>32</sup> Both contributions have basically the same philosophy and very similar contents. The first represents a rather extensive analysis of hitherto developments, a quite critical evaluation of migration policies applied by the EU, a subjective identification of shortcomings in the process of managing the crisis, and a set of recommendations and measures to be done without delay. The latter text is a condensed, only moderately modified version of the former; thus it comprises all its key comments, conclusions and suggestions. Due to the complex and coherent character, the given contribution(s) may be called Soros' Migration Plan III.

31 *Foreign Policy Magazine*, July 19, 2016: <http://foreignpolicy.com/2016/07/19/this-is-europes-last-chance-to-fix-its-refugee-policy-george-soros/>, retrieved September 6, 2017.

32 <https://www.georgesoros.com/2016/09/12/saving-refugees-to-save-europe/>, retrieved September 6, 2017.

According to the author, he submits this plan as an effective alternative to the EU's current approach to the migration crisis. SMP III is based on 7 fundamental pillars (shortened and selected):

1. "The EU must take in a substantial number of refugees directly from front-line countries in a secure and orderly manner." "... If the EU made a commitment to admit even a mere 300,000 refugees annually..."
2. "The EU must regain control of its borders. There is little that alienates and scares publics more than scenes of chaos."
3. "The EU needs to find sufficient funds to finance a comprehensive migration policy. It is estimated that at least 30 billion per year will be needed for a number of years."
4. "The EU must build common mechanisms for protecting borders, determining asylum claims, and relocating refugees. A single European asylum process would remove the incentives for asylum shopping."
5. "A voluntary matching mechanism for relocating refugees is needed. The EU cannot coerce member states to accept refugees they do not want, or refugees to go where they are not wanted."
6. "The EU must offer far greater support to countries that host refugees, and it must be more generous in its approach to Africa." ... "This means creating jobs in refugees' home countries, which would reduce the pressure to migrate to Europe."
7. "The eventual creation of a welcoming environment for economic migrants. Given Europe's aging population, the benefits migration brings far outweigh the costs of integrating immigrants."

The last Soros Migration Plan in its entirety (i.e. with remarks to the situation, outlined flaws and challenges, and seven pillars with recommendations) constitutes a relatively elaborate text, being of more logical, precise and balanced nature than both earlier versions described above. It is considerably critical to the overall work and concrete activities undertaken by the European Union to tackle the migration crisis in Europe. This is well apparent in statements such as: "The EU is trying to impose quotas ... forcing refugees to take up residence in countries where they are not welcome and do not want to go. ... This is unfortunate." or "The agreement with Turkey was ... imposed on Europe by German Chancellor Angela Merkel. ... The agreement with Turkey was problematic from its inception." Though I can completely accept the first statement, a crucial question should be posed pondering the second statement: how to stop/diminish in a different way the unceasing massive influx of immigrants to Europe through Turkey at that time?

As far as the individual pillars of Soros' Migration Plan are concerned, according to me it is possible:

- to agree with Points 2, 4, 5 and 6 of SMP. Much of them is already being realised or planned. For example, the Border and Coast Guard Agency (former Frontex) has been in operation since autumn 2016 and is conducting several missions at present. The reform of the Common European Asylum System is one of the most important tasks within migration management in the EU (Bendel, 2017) and especially the revision of the Dublin Regulation is under heavy discussion

- now.<sup>33</sup> The European Union has recently also manifested its growing interest in cooperation with and support to African countries as a principal source of migrants (EU–Africa Summits, mutual dialogues, other initiatives); this should be even more intensive. As for the compulsory quotas and distribution of asylum seekers across the EU’s Member States, I have believed from the very beginning that this approach is ineffective, unsystematic, inhuman and untenable;
- to practically agree with Point 3: the financial means assigned to sustainable comprehensive migration policy in the Union should be unambiguously much greater, just an appropriate sum should be subject to thorough analyses by expert teams from respective EU institutions;
  - to be in partial accordance with Point 7 of SMP. As regards economic migration in the EU, this is basically in the competence of Member States and depends on conditions in the domestic labour markets. Then, in a long-term perspective, migration can help decelerate the enormous rate of ageing in Europe only to a limited extent (UN, 2000; UN, 2004). Of course, improving the integration process of migrants is beneficial to all sides involved;
  - to absolutely disagree with Point 1. There cannot be a fixed annual quota for taking asylum seekers/refugees to the EU as a whole (though the figure suggested by Soros fell from 1 million persons set in SMP I to 300,000 in SMP III). The real number should flexibly reflect the situation in affected regions of the world and should be based on common consent among the Member States. Besides, the European Union has long been a significant destination for migrants from third countries. Until the migration crisis, the number of those legally arriving to it each year accounted for 1.5 million (by Eurostat data – see Table).

## FINAL REMARKS

It may be summarised that the influx of migrants (refugees) into European countries, particularly the European Union, in the course of 2015 – 2016 was the biggest since the end of the Second World War (Kingsley, 2016; Divinský, 2016). The EU’s immigration, asylum, integration systems as well as its border management came under unprecedented pressure. But not only has the quantitative aspect been momentous; the Union and its Member States, their chief political representatives, elites, stakeholders, media and general public were not sufficiently prepared to act deliberately, quickly, effectively, synergistically, truthfully and sensitively.

It is clear now that the migration crisis has become one of the most serious threats to the internal cohesion of the European Union in its history and a fundamental challenge to its future. From another viewpoint, some characterised the events of 2015 – 2016 as the greatest humanitarian crisis of our generation (Deliso, 2017). Nevertheless, the detailed evaluation of EU’s migration approaches, policies and activities, their merits or failures, is much beyond the topic of this contribution.

In this context, my primary objective was to present, describe, discuss and assess the so-called Soros Migration Plan in the background of migration development in the given years. After examining a number of available sources, (political) declarations, media outputs, related databases, reports and literature, one may state that:

<sup>33</sup> <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/legislative-train/theme-towards-a-new-policy-on-migration/file-revision-of-the-dublin-regulation>, retrieved October 11, 2017.

- Soros' Migration Plan does really exist. It is actually a series of three essays, published by the author successively in September 2015, April 2016, and July/September 2016 on his own website<sup>34</sup> and in the media, freely accessible to all. Therefore, the existence of SMP should not be questioned or denied;
- George Soros alone used the word "plan" in these text(s). As they have the coherent structure with distinguishable textual passages and - notably - sets of measures to be introduced over a certain time period, the mentioned word has been properly applied;
- the last of the three demonstrated versions has been not only the most updated, but also the most balanced, comprehensive and realistic. Hence, this version can be fully legitimately named Soros' Migration Plan and used for any further purposes;
- some of the key recommendations submitted have substantially changed over time in the single versions: this is the case of the number of asylum seekers to be accepted by the European Union annually - it declined from 1 million to 300,000 persons. The latter figure should be duly and correctly referred to within SMP at present;
- Soros' Migration Plan as a whole has been rather critical to EU's foreign, migration, border protection and development aid policies and activities carried out until now or prepared. Simultaneously, the plan categorically opposes the compulsory quota system and forced relocation of asylum seekers across the Member States. This fact might be also one of the reasons for its misinterpretation, disregard to ignorance by official authorities;
- since George Soros is not a politician, scholar, specialised journalist, migration activist or so, his plan should be perceived only as a subjective non-professional response to the ongoing EU/European migration (refugee) crisis from 2015 onwards (no principal report, study, strategy, reform, agenda etc.);
- for the above reasons, SMP should not be overestimated in the academic debate or decision-making process. Likewise, heated to hostile disputes over the plan in the political fora, media or elsewhere are completely useless and incorrect. Soros' Migration Plan thus represents just personal opinions of a well-known businessman on one of the biggest contemporary global challenges.

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<http://www.interreg-danube.eu/approved-projects/drim>

<http://www.uet.sav.sk/?q=sk/dunajska-informacna-platforma-pre-ekonomicku-integraciu-migrantov>

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<sup>34</sup> <https://www.georgesoros.com/essays/>, retrieved October 10, 2017.

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