

Summary

Migration policy is among the most politicized and disruptive issue in modern democracies. Because of diverging interests between the EU Member States in the area of migration and asylum, it has been difficult to reform migration policies. This has become particularly apparent during the migration crises of the past decade. This thesis focuses on decision-making processes behind EU migration policies in light of recent crises, looking at the period 2015–2022. This period covers three significant external shocks. First, the civil war in Syria, causing the displacement of millions of Syrians. Second, the so-called Belarus–European Union border crisis of 2021. Third, the Russian war in Ukraine. These crises vary in scope, from a few thousand migrants on the border to several million migrants in Europe, and they have been met with very different policy responses from the EU and from individual Member States. The comparative perspective this allows provides an opportunity to examine what conditions lead to different policy responses. This thesis answers the research question: *In times of migration crises, what determines the extent to which EU migration policies are characterized by internal coordination or by externalization?* Using a case study approach, it examines the conditions under which migration crises lead to harmonization or externalization.

Through case studies, this thesis explores the roles of the European Commission (hereafter Commission) as the main proponent of common EU migration policies, and the Visegrád group (consisting of Hungary, Poland, Slovakia and the Czech Republic) as the main opponent. It investigates the policy processes behind notable examples of external EU migration policies – the EU–Jordan Compact and the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa (EUTF) – as well as investigating negotiations behind EU migration policies on the internal dimension.

The thesis concludes that both harmonization and externalization can occur in response to migration crises. Externalization policies, exemplified by the EU–Jordan Compact and the EUTF, were policies that were acceptable both to the Commission and to the Visegrád group. Member States that opposed cooperation on the internal dimension, even those that were not directly affected by the crisis, supported these external measures. The Commission wanted to find solutions that all stakeholders could agree on and pushed for external migration policies that were aligned with its own (sometimes non-migration related) policy goals. Weak internal harmonization occurred in the immediate response to the Ukraine crisis, when even the most

reluctant Member States (the Visegrád group), agreed to solidarity measures, but only in a temporary scheme, and only concerning a very limited group of refugees. The analysis demonstrates that crises can lead to harmonization or externalization depending on two conditions. First, the need to ‘signal’ to an external audience your readiness to respond to a crisis, and this need arises from the ambition to live up to international norms. Second, the level of constraints to cooperation on the internal dimension.

EU migration policy is an example of strategic policymaking in a multi-level institutional setting where normative factors such as concerns over identity, solidarity and reputation have a strong influence. Normative factors play a significant role in determining whether migration crises create the conditions for internal or external cooperation. For example, concerns over sovereignty, security and identity can represent a constraint to cooperation on the internal dimension. Examples of concerns that can motivate signalling are humanitarianism, solidarity and reputation.