

European integration was in its most complicated phase even before the COVID-19 pandemics started. Many people ask for a stronger role of member states and refraining integration at a mostly economic level. Therefore, Europe needs success stories. Erasmus programme is certainly one of the most often mentioned success stories, Europeans certainly appreciate also mention removing roaming costs. However, cross-border co-operation belongs among the most visible success stories, as it has helped to eliminate the negative barrier effect of national borders, which are often referred to as the scars of the history. Despite the internal EU borders don't create barrier to movement anymore, Europeans still have the borders-related mental barrier in their heads.

Yet this barrier is currently less important than it used to be. In 20<sup>th</sup> century Europe experienced two most destructive conflicts in the human history. Cross-border co-operation has helped to achieve current high level of mutual reconciliation between former enemies. The most prominent example of this reconciliation can be found alongside the Rhine river, mainly on Franco-German border, but also between the Netherlands and Germany or Denmark and Germany. Cross-border co-operation has also helped towards Czech-Polish reconciliation in the east of mutual border (Cieszyn region).

Our research has therefore an ambition to focus on the way, how has the cross-border co-operation changed the borderlands in Visegrád countries since the late 1990s until 2020. We will also analyse whether the COVID-19 and migration crisis has changed the co-operation between individual V4 countries and also their neighbours. Poland, Czechia and other V4 countries joined the European integration process and started to benefit from the possibilities offered by the EU membership. However, refugee crisis stressed the difference between East and West of the EU. The migration crisis of 2015 led to the rising Euroscepticism and had also its consequences for borders. Substantially different positions of Visegrád Group political leaders on the migration crisis issues contributed to the current wide perception of the V4 countries as the enfant terrible of the EU. In V4, the migration crisis has helped to bring to the power/cement their position at the power of political parties, which ask for a stronger role of the national states in Europe. These parties tend to focus on national agendas and don't accent international co-operation, including cross-border co-operation. And impacts of COVID-19 can make it even worse.