

European Borders and the Justification of Migrant Admissions

The history of the European Union has been marked by the twin aims of liberalising movement, work and residence for European people's within its larger borders accompanied by a more and more robust securitising of those external frontiers. Both of these can be understood as the progressive entrenchment in the minds of its citizens of an ideal of European civilisation, with its own nature, history and traditions. Europe is something in which it is worth participating, for those on the inside, and defending, against non-European potential intruders. In fact, aliens can be admitted not just by them moving but also by shifting borders themselves: hence debates about whether Turkey is genuinely European. Either way, aliens represent an existential threat. In reality, the internal diversity of values, beliefs, peoples and practices sits uncomfortably with the pan-European ideal. Alongside this identity conception lies a separate reason for suspicion: Europeans (sitting atop the poorest continent on the earth) wish to retain their relative wealth and privilege. Neither is this a genuine justification. Some cosmopolitan writers have argued for the contrary view of open borders. However, in reality this would do little to relieve global poverty, which is a largely a case of helping poor states develop themselves, and nor does it follow straightforwardly from the right to free movement which is always qualified in some way. A third alternative sees Europe as a subject of justification. On this latter view the numbers of migrants that each state should adopt is a matter of global agreement based on impartial criteria. These include population density, national wealth and the quality of the environmental infrastructure. The paper discusses some of the issues and problems the quota agreement view involves, and concludes by asking whether each European state should set its own quota or Europe as a whole.