

## LEAKING WELFARE STATES

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Europe's political and social project has, since the post-war period, aspired to a concept of citizenship that transcends the diversity of models of national citizenship rooted in territorialised concepts that preclude membership of a single culture. From another perspective, openly transnational discourses claim the universality of human rights as an organising principle of European citizenship. The 1957 Treaty of Rome recognises the free movement of people as one of the founding principles of the European Community. From the start, this yearning for European citizenship carried simultaneously the key to its own destruction with it. Firstly, because freedom of movement has always been mainly linked to labour integration. While the treaty speaks of rights, the free movement of European workers from the early 60s onwards was, in reality, facilitating the massive flow of economic migration from southern Europe to its northern and central regions. The idea of European citizenship finds fertile ground above all when its development benefits economic integration and the consolidation of the single market. Secondly, rights in Europe are almost always subject to limitations that are justified by public policies and security matters that are usually restricted in the nation-states. Despite globalist discourses, various models of social integration have survived and persist in Europe.

The recent migratory waves have little in common with the migratory movements of the 1960s and 1970s, both within and outside Europe. European societies, punished by the recession, with serious internal imbalances in both social equality and labour market participation, are less willing to give opportunities to those arriving from outside compared with the old European times of full economic expansion. What is more, the poorly-named multicultural or integration policies introduced by European governments to manage the diversity resulting from immigration have created substantial tensions and problems. As Malik says,<sup>1</sup> the, in general, failure of these policies in many European countries has encouraged the dangerous perception that Europe is suffering from excessive immigration and a lack of integration. It is a perception that is difficult to counteract with arguments based on the need for foreign labour in ageing populations. Ultimately, the capitalisation on the discontent by far-right parties is largely due to the significant imbalance

1. Kenan Malik. "The Failure of Multiculturalism". *Foreign Affairs* (March/April 2015) (online) <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/western-europe/2015-03-01/failure-multiculturalism>

that exists today between the most vulnerable social groups and the main political parties (those whom Ford and Goodwin call the “left behind”).<sup>2</sup>

If the social, economic and political contexts are not comparable, can responses remain unchanged? Undoubtedly, for countries with solid welfare systems, open borders present a number of dilemmas. The tradition of countries like Sweden and Germany of offering political asylum dates back to a time in history when being a political refugee was a privileged form of migration. The change in the scope and scale of today’s migration means that these policies, which were not designed for the kind of eventualities that we now face, need revising. The humanitarian scale of this crisis makes depending on the greater or lesser generosity of the European welfare states problematic. Establishing quotas that to some extent balance out each country’s efforts seems a reasonable step but also one that is insufficient. The number of people travelling each day in different parts of Europe (10,000 - 20,000 according to Frontex) adds up to the enormous difficulties countries are facing in handling asylum applications. The different administrative procedures are clearly incapable of managing this crisis. It is like trying to empty the sea with a spoon.

Orders are given in the European Union based only on what the market demands, thereby fulfilling its founding values. But the effects of this rationale in the democratic countries that make it up erode and pervert the formally existing democracy. In a recent doctoral thesis, Clara Marquet described how in 1956 the socialist minister Guy Mollet proposed harmonisation of social and fiscal legislation as a prior condition of market integration. It is today self-evident that the desire of some to build a strong Social Europe is fading away in the name of global economic efficiency on the one hand and national interests on the other. We have a common market and a single currency but inequality abounds.

But the problem is that with today’s Europe, we will neither be able to find a way out of the crumbling of the logic that allowed the creation of the welfare states in 1945, nor, without Europe, will it be possible to go beyond resistance-like autarchy. Today’s Europe is not thought out to be able to respond to trends and dilemmas that put its formally democratic conceptions at risk. Despite explicit reference to the need to combine social cohesion and economic growth, the former has clearly been sacrificed in the name of the latter. Without international organisations endowed with the political will and the necessary resources to fulfil the treaties that we have all agreed, this human tragedy will continue only to benefit mafias who trade in desperation.

2. Robert Ford y Matthew Goodwin. «Understanding UKIP: Identity, Social Change and the Left Behind». *The Political Quarterly*, vol. 85, n.º 3 (2014), pp. 277-284.