

The myth of free movement

The development of EU migration policies is both chaotic and logical, in the sense that economic interests have driven it to a point where people are drowning in the Mediterranean Sea. This according to Peo Hansen, Associate Professor of Political Science at REMESO, Linköping University, who is interviewed by Europa Europa's Anneli Carnelid.

– The European Commission doesn't want to talk about the free movement within the union as a migration policy, but that is exactly what it is. And the will to have migration without restrictions within the EU has major implications for migration policies concerning people outside of the EU – not least for people seeking refuge– according to Peo Hansen, who has written a book about how the cooperation around migration policies within the EU developed.

The EU member states agreed on giving up control of their national borders, which was necessary in order to make the free movement of goods, services, capital and work power within the union possible, only if the outer borders of the union were strengthened.

– As a result, the freedom to which the EU is referring, is highly selective, a modified truth. The development of EU migration policies is both chaotic and logical. Chaotic because of the disastrous developments which leads to people dying in the Mediterranean Sea, but logical since it didn't happen just like that, the development follows the logic of strong political and economic interests, says Peo Hansen.

In fact, migration policy was initially an important part of European cooperation. It was about encouraging what was considered to be economically favourable migration of labour within the union. Italy thought they had a surplus population, which the government wanted to get rid of. At the same time, other countries like West Germany, had a great need for immigrant labour from the end of the 1950's onwards, according to Peo Hansen, who has been studying documents from that time.

– From the 1960's onwards, two divided migration systems emerged within the EU; one for EU migrants with free movement and all the rights that followed it, and a much less favourable one for migrants from countries outside of the EU, says Peo Hansen.

Since the 80's, the European Commission has been talking about migration within the EU in terms of mobility, citizenship and free movement, since terms like migration and migrants have come to be seen as something negative within the union. As an example, Peo Hansen mentions the Swedish EU commissioner Cecilia Malmström and her upset feelings over the term "EU migrants".

– Cecilia Malmström and the whole European Commission have several times stressed that there is no such thing as "EU migrants", since all "EU citizens" are entitled to free movement within the union. Since Malmström is expected to protect this free movement, this is something that she has to say. The terms migrant and migration have for a long time been negatively defined by the EU

itself, and viewed as something that must be tightly regulated in order to defend the internal market cooperation, says Peo Hansen. However, the call for restrictions does not concern all types of free movement.

– When tens of thousands of Romanian physicians with expensive educations paid for by Romanian tax money migrate to Germany, France, Great Britain, and Sweden, it is called mobility and free movement. But when poor people from Romania come to the same countries they are called EU migrants and benefit tourists, and you immediately begin to hear demands for new regulations to prevent them from coming, according to Peo Hansen.

The will to create a system that secures free migration for citizens of the EU and secures the inner market, rests upon the idea that this is only possible if all other people are controlled and restricted. This is why asylum policies is an area where the EU has come quite far in its supranationalism, something that began with the Schengen Cooperation and the Dublin Convention (that later became the Dublin Regulation) and became finalized through the Amsterdam Treaty in 2009. This has led to what Peo Hansen describes as "the solution of the lowest common denominator".

– With a political dynamic where the only thing the member states can agree on is that they want as few asylum seekers as possible, it's not hard to see that this will lead to policies intended to keep people out. However, this is also a result of a system. At the same time as the militarisation of the borders increases the labour market of the EU is in some ways completely dependent on paperless people as a labour force, says Peo Hansen.

Another example that reveals the economic powers behind the migration policies is the decision on so-called circular migration, or the EU directive on seasonal work, which means that in the future people will be allowed entry into the EU for a few months a year to work, after which they have to leave the union again.

– The directive has been explicitly created to make it possible for some people to perform labour that is so unattractive and so underpaid that no EU citizen is believed to want it. The whole idea is to create labour markets within the EU that are populated by poor people from outside of the union, says Peo Hansen.

Facts: Who's in charge – Sweden or the EU?

In 2009, asylum and migration policies became a transnational issue, commonly managed by the member states of the EU. The limits of the migration policies are drawn by the EU governments through the Council of Ministers, the European Commission, and the EU Parliament. However, it is up to each member state to make a decision on the individual applications of asylum seekers.

After the tragedy in Lampedusa in October 2013, when over 300 people lost their lives, many politicians showed concern in the media and called for immediate changes. In spite of many extra summits, the Council failed to come up with one single suggestion on how to decrease the risks for people seeking

refuge. This has been typical for the whole collaboration. The one thing the countries could agree on, were stricter border controls and increased funding to Frontex – not legislative changes that might make things easier for migrants. All of the suggestions from the EU Commission about legal ways into Europe have been rejected by the Council. The Swedish government has not reacted positively to a single suggestion for legal ways of entry into Europe. (Except to increased refugee quotas for *other* member states.)