

The case for controlling migration - a new paper from J...

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When two friends, whose opinions you respect, agree on something enough to write about it together I tend to take note. Jonathon Porritt and Colin Hines, both friends and both respected environmental campaigners, have co-authored a paper on immigration. This is a difficult area for the left. I commented on their paper in draft. I don't agree with it all. But I think the debate is worth having. [This is what Jonathan wrote about the paper on his blog](#):

I still find it hard to believe that more people in this country feel we'd be better off outside the EU than remaining in the EU. For me, there are three main reasons for this astonishing outcome at the 2016 Referendum:

1. *The Stronger In campaign was dreadful, a botched, Tory-driven nightmare from start to finish.*
2. *'The politics of fear' on which the campaign was based left no room for any positive vision of the future of Europe.*
3. *All those on the progressive left (Labour, Lib Dems and the Green Party) had not the first idea how to deal with what turned out to be a deeply unpleasant debate about IMMIGRATION.*

That all-important third point has been weighing on my mind ever since. So, earlier this year, together with my good friend Colin Hines, we started work on a paper on immigration — unapologetically advocating for 'taking back control' of immigration into and between EU countries, but from a progressive political perspective rather than through the warped mindset of, say, the Daily Mail.

That paper (['The Progressive Case for Taking Control of EU Immigration — and Avoiding Brexit in the Process'](#)) is being launched today.

Do please have a look at the accompanying PR — which you'll see immediately below:

"PRESS RELEASE

Progressive Parties in the UK Must Now Address the Immigration Challenge Head On if Brexit is to be Avoided

Immigration was the dominant issue for voters in the 2016 Referendum demanding that UK politicians should 'take back control' of our borders from the EU.

Since then, however, Brexit discussions have focussed on the so-called 'divorce issues', with immigration apparently off the agenda. This has allowed Labour, the Lib Dems and the Greens to keep their heads down on what remains the highly controversial issue of immigration.

A hard-hitting paper from Jonathon Porritt and Colin Hines suggests that this is very unwise. Public opinion on Brexit continues to soften, but any serious prospect of avoiding a 'hard Brexit' (which remains a critical priority for all progressive parties), let alone of rejecting Brexit altogether, depends on decisively addressing UK voters' concerns about immigration.

Jonathon Porritt: "Progressive parties have already paid a high price, across Europe, by allowing right-wing and populist parties to manipulate citizens' concerns about high levels of immigration coming into and moving between EU countries. All EU countries are now wrestling with this ongoing dilemma, with the majority of their citizens demanding that their governments should indeed manage immigration far more rigorously – in effect, taking back more control of their borders. Progressive parties are now duty bound to develop much smarter, compassionate policies to achieve precisely that."

Colin Hines: "What is inadequately understood is that political discussions about reinterpreting 'freedom of movement' to allow nation states to manage migration is already taking place across Europe. Such an emphasis in the UK would strengthen support for a 'No Brexit' position, as the public is becoming increasingly uneasy about the present state of negotiations on leaving the EU."

As the paper highlights, 2017 elections in the Netherlands, France, Germany, Austria and the Czech Republic have made this a pivotal issue for all centre left and Green parties, in a way that can no longer be ignored or deferred. And there are already welcome signals that both Labour and the Lib Dems are beginning to move in this direction as well, but they need to move far faster and far more proactively than is currently the case. As indeed does the Green Party.

Both Jonathon Porritt and Colin Hines believe that Brexit can be avoided, but that this will only happen when all three political parties address the immigration issue head on, reassuring people that we really can and must take back more control over our borders."

And if that grabs your attention, check out [the report](#) itself.

Colin and I have written it both to address some 'taboo territory' for the progressive left – and to start to undo some of the damage caused by the 2016 Referendum.