Spare a thought for Hungary: Why a false tolerance is bad for Hungary and even worse for Europe by Nóra de Wijs

In his article from 15 September, "Spare a thought for Hungary", Mr Melik Kaylan defends the stance of Central and Eastern European countries, particularly Hungary's, in the recent refugee crisis. In his effort to explain the reason for Hungary's handling of the refugee influx, he actually defends a growing xenophobic attitude and way of communicating in the country that goes against all European values and our goals for the European Union. He also misinterprets Hungary's social and political development.

Though Mr Kaylan writes about the European Union as a supranational system enforcing its rules on diversity and multiculturalism on member states to defend the actions of Mr Orban and other Eastern European leaders, the European Union is in actuality entirely driven by member states. When joining the European Union 2004 - by their free will and with strong support from their populations - the countries of Central and Eastern Europe accepted the core European values such as democracy, free trade, transparency, fundamental rights, cultural diversity and not least the protection of minorities and the rejection of xenophobia. No country in the region was forced to join the European Union and none are forced to use European funds for their development. Citizens of these countries, notably Hungarians, are leaving to the West not only for better salaries but also to live and work in an environment of tolerance, respect for human and political rights and professionalism without nepotism; to live in a place where they can make a difference and a contribute to society and politics.

Mr Kaylan implies that Hungary must recover its national identity and that this process could be endangered by the impositions of foreigners from other cultures. On this point, Mr Kaylan is wrong. Hungary is not - and never was - a homogenous nation and it has a long history of intercultural exchange with other nations. There are 13 ethnic minority groups recognized by law in Hungary including a large Roma population. Even after WWII Hungary has retained a strong Jewish community integrated so well that they are not even recognized as ethnic minority. Sadly, the so-called "recovery" of the Hungarian identity that Mr Kaylan alludes to has been taking place for years at the expense of these minorities in addition to gays, single mothers, non-married couples, non-religious individuals or simply citizens with a different opinion then that of the current government. This discriminative process mustn't be continued by rebuilding the national identity at the expense of refugees. Moreover, the political developments of the last month - exemplified by the latest "National Consultation on Migration and Terrorism" - made perfectly clear that the political actions taken by the current Hungarian government in the refugee crisis exemplifies a race to the bottom between Fidesz and far-right Jobbik, who in their lust for power exploit the plight of refugees and migrants searching for protection and a better life.

Referring to the actual German government and its political decisions as an "abuse" of Hungary and pointing out Germany as Hungary's former tormentor is not only ignorant but terribly dangerous, too. It sustains Hungary's self-perception as the victim, always suffering from oppression and injustice. But by victimizing itself, Hungary abdicates its core responsibilities as an EU member state, among which is to uphold core EU values. Giving up this responsibility would not only deepen the East-West divide in Europe Mr Kaylan was referring to, but could also lead us to a profound tragedy in Europe: the death of European values.