

## ‘Glass walls’ — considerations about European multiculturalism

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*European culture — the product of Western civilization that grew on the pillars of multiculturalism, expansion and progress. It is a place where for centuries a melting pot of cultures has been a natural driving force of progress and development, to which Europe owes not only its wealth. Europe also owes demographic problems to this, which today constitute the most important subject of scientific debate on the future of Europe and opportunities to maintain the achievements of the past, the level of civilization built by generations. ‘Glass walls’ invoked in the title of the article are of symbolic nature, no mention is made of real barriers known in history as the Great Wall of China, the Berlin Wall, Hadrian’s Wall and others. It is about mental and invisible walls focused around attitudes such as the ethnic and cultural distance, as well as intolerance and prejudices against any otherness.*

**Keywords:** *Europe, migration crisis, multiculturalism, a melting pot of cultures, migrations.*

We live in Europe — a place where the foundations were laid for western civilization, from where for nearly half a millennium rays of splendor and development have been reaching almost every corner of the world; we live in a place that has been building its power not only through progress and development, but also blood and suffering. We must not forget the wealth of nations, from which we draw, the achievements of science, which illuminated the darkness of medieval Europe. In gratitude let us create a world friendly for ‘foreigners’ and demolish walls erected before our eyes.

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## INTRODUCTION

Whenever a question about the future of Europe arises, the subconsciousness offers the Latin phrase placed in the emblem of the United States of America – *E pluribus unum* [9], which in free translation means ‘unity in diversity’. Almost at the same time another question appears with regard to the phenomenon that emerged in colonial times, further was strengthened during the beginning of the statehood of the United States of America in the eighteenth and nineteenth century and continues to this day, despite the very bright cultural contrasts, social inequality and attitudes of racism and intolerance still deeply rooted in the society. That phenomenon provokes a profound reflection, taking the form of questions, *what factors made the American public, so ethnically diverse and built on conflicts of cultures and intolerance, able to create not only the state, but also the empire shaping the economy, politics and mass culture in the world?* This question cannot be definitely answered, however, the fact is that the state exists and will probably exist for a long time, in spite of the internal problems arising from cultural heterogeneity and ethnic differences.

On the basis of the issues under consideration, a dilemma arises relating to multiculturalism in Europe, its nature and the interpretation frameworks of classical definitions of the very notion. It has so much importance that the new reality that Europe has faced imposes a need to look at the future of its inhabitants from the perspective of changing social order, which is anchored in the migration crisis. Thus, how to define European multiculturalism: *is it to be treated as a social fact justified by multi-ethnicity and cultural mosaicism? Can it be looked at from the perspective of social relations and*

*interactions between representatives of different cultures?* The answer to these questions as well as many others remaining in the subconscious is very difficult, and no theory or definition provides responses to them. Let these questions be complemented by the reflection on the opportunity to create such a model of European society, which would be even minimally integrated, tolerant and respectful of cultural values of other nations. Is European ‘diversity’ able to transform into ‘unity’ in the future? It seems that neither before – in the era of lofty slogans of tolerance, integration and respect – nor now – especially when the European ‘melting pot of cultures’ not only ‘boils’, but reaches a critical value of ‘boiling point’ – creating a multi-ethnic enclave devoid of conflicts of cultures is realistic.

## 1. DILEMMAS OF MULTICULTURALISM

In simple terms, the thesis may be assumed that the phenomenon of multiculturalism was a constant element in the development of tribes, ethnic groups, nations and societies integrated within state structures; real but still unscientific cognition sources of the phenomena refer to the territorial expansion of the ancient nations that within the framework of territorial conquests formed a multicultural model of the contemporary world. In Antiquity and subsequent epochs, the cultural heterogeneity of Europe, the Mediterranean region as well as Asia was not only a natural and universal phenomenon, but a continuous process – the *sine qua non* of building empires, strengthening their power and creating a ‘new’ culture at the expense of other, weaker cultures. Due to the expansion the new social order was created with its ba-

sis strengthened by diffusion of components of material and immaterial culture, co-creating pillars of many contemporary cultures. While speaking about the diffusion of cultures, the reality in which it occurred cannot be ignored. The expansion itself carried behind conflicts with all their consequences, which repeatedly led to the total destruction of entire nations and their culture, material and immaterial.

Both Antiquity and the Middle Ages, as well as the subsequent eras have never been explored in terms of a scientific approach to multiculturalism. They were treated as natural facts associated with population and integration processes arising out of alliances, pacts and unions of political nature. It was not until the nineteenth century that multiculturalism became a subject of interest to the scientific world, thus inscribing itself in the turbulent history of the United States. The country became the cradle of the theory born on the grounds of intolerance and conflicts of cultures, including racial ones, called a melting pot of cultures, and two transversal schools of multiculturalism: *diffusionism*, created by Friedrich Ratzel (1844–1904) and continued by Leo Frobenius (1873–1938), associated with the geographical environment, and *parallelism*, showing multiculturalism from the perspective of the creation of independent cultures functioning side by side [1, p.85]. There have also been approaches referring to the strength of the expansion and influences from some cultures to others. One of them is based on the assertion that there is a limited number of fundamental cultures that played a significant role in shaping human culture [1, p. 85] and gave the foundation for the concept of *cultural circles*, introduced to the classification of concepts by Fritz Graebner (1877–1934) and Bernhard Ankermann (1859–1943) [8, p. 632, 633].

They are the resultant of the uniqueness of cultural characteristics of ethnic groups and entire nations, which naturally situate them in the foreign and culturally heterogeneous environment on the position of ‘the foreign’, ‘the other’, and sometimes – depending on historical events – even ‘the enemy’. Despite the variable and dynamic socio-political reality in the world, these old theories and approaches still have many universal and unchanging elements, which undoubtedly should include contacts of cultures and differences between them. These two elements seem to be permanent, since the beginning of the civilization people have had a natural tendency to move and establish contacts with representatives of new and foreign cultures.

Among numerous definitions describing multiculturalism as a fact, state, process or phenomenon, the simple in its form and yet precise Piotr Sztompka’s approach deserves attention, as he shows it as (...) *the ideological stance emphasizing the right of different communities to different ways of life, and even promoting the thesis of the equal worth of all cultures* [10, p. 255]. In the background of the definition in question the whole range of issues appears, without which multiculturalism is not entitled to rest on the pillars of equality and respect to ‘foreigners’. These include, among others: tolerance, integration and cultural assimilation as well as cultural relativism, which in the realities of the present day seem to be the theory almost entirely devoid of any practical references. Its message is clear and unambiguous – the right to coexistence with other cultures in one geographical area. *How real is the demand for cultural egalitarianism?* It seems that in the reality of the migration crisis there is no chance of success.

Talking about multiculturalism, it should be also pointed out that it does not

cover all aspects that are associated with the coexistence of different cultures in one geographical area. The first attempt to precisely define the interpretation framework for this phenomenon was made in 1915 by the American Jewish philosopher Horace Kallen [9, p. 21], who introduced the concept of *cultural pluralism* to the taxonomy of terms in the field of culture. It is worth noting that despite the passage of time, in many studies it is considered synonymously with multiculturalism, as it was underpinned by the assumption that *multiculturalism* is based on the coexistence and mutual positive relations, whereas *cultural pluralism* is nothing but apparent coexistence founded upon the attitudes of avoidance, mistrust and resentment often cultural. As for both phenomena, the similar outlook is presented by Peter Kivistö, John Rex and Leo Kuper who argue that *pluralistic societies are those where different ethnic groups live next to each other, no contact between them takes place beside broadly conceived market, in turn, multicultural societies are those that extend interactions also to other spheres* [6, p. 45]. This raises the question of *which phenomenon do we deal with in Europe: multiculturalism or cultural pluralism?* Or it may be that a new phenomenon has emerged that could be called *pragmatic* or *rational multiculturalism* related to benefiting from the existence of other cultures in the European environment, or even *forced multiculturalism*, based on the creation of the political correctness policy towards the state, which cannot be changed.

Contemporary multiculturalism, burdened with the stigma of intolerance, chauvinism, ethnocentrism and divisions into 'our' and 'foreign', imposes the need to revise the age-old theory of Charles Taylor's *politics of recognition* assuming the formation of human identity through dialogue,

interaction with the cultural and social environment. Its basis included wishful thinking contained in the following words: (...) *appropriate recognition is not only the expression of respect, which people deserve. It is a basic human need* [9, p. 24–25]. Ch. Taylor indicates that the phenomenon of multiculturalism (...) *is not based on socio-political systems and the interactions within, but is limited to meeting different, often distant from each other, ethnic or national cultures, allegedly internally homogeneous cultural structures of permanent specific characteristics of established by traditions* [5, p. 144]. This 'closeness' of cultural characteristics may not always have a positive effect, since wherever the changing ethnic composition and the increased inflow of foreign cultures violate economic security, and not just this, of indigenous people, conflicts of cultures will almost always occur. Another important variable resulting from cultural 'proximity' are usually legacy and historical grievances and prejudices arising on their ground.

Today's definition of multiculturalism requires not only taking a look at it from the perspective of new conditions, which Europe has caught up. Also caution is necessary in constructing the definitions' operators, which for many countries may prove to be incorrect, inadequate, and sometimes sensitive. While the political and ideological approach to multiculturalism created by the European Union usually has a common denominator imposing 'the collective voice' on its members, each EU member state represents its own solutions in this field and promotes its own policy towards 'foreigners'. The scale of extremes is huge and they can be included in opposing euphemisms: 'bridges' and 'walls'. On the ground of the contemporary ethnic and cultural problems of Europe, the point of creating a vision of

multiculturalism understood in terms of Ch. Tylor's *policy of recognition*, or even *cultural pluralism* Horace Kallen, should be called into doubt. It must be stated with all the firmness that the classical model of multiculturalism in Europe is more or less a fiction, which 'feeds itself' and grows in strength in effect of moral panic caused by politicians and the media.

## 2. THE ETIOLOGY OF MIGRATION

When in 2011 there were mass demonstrations in Arab countries; the international community once again became convinced that even the most fossilized regimes and dictatorships are not entitled to 'infinite power'. The 'domino effect' – as the wave of mass riots and revolutions in North Africa, the Middle East and Muslim countries in Asia is commonly called – proved to be a peculiar phenomenon, both political and social. On the other hand, it confirmed the rule observed by Auguste Comte after French Revolution of 1789 that social change does not always lead to improving the fate of the people, that the overthrow of power does not always guarantee better governance. This rule was further confirmed in the case of some countries affected by the revolution. To a lesser extent it describes Egypt, where the process of creating the political system on the model of democracy is still underway. The continued transformation is borne out by the fact that from 11 February 2011, after the resignation of President Husni Mubarak, three presidents successively took the office [2, p. 100]. The return of power based on the strong military influence on society and the economy became a fact, and the presidency resting in the hands of the former commander of the

Egyptian armed forces, Abd al-Fattah as-Sisi, only confirms the return to the previous political system. The third since 2011 and the second after the change of government the Constitution of Egypt is also indicative of political instability. It is worth noting that as a result of changes throughout the entire period of Hosni Mubarak's rule, in the year of 2016 about 300 thousand migrants and the so-called refugees came to Europe from Egypt. According to the EU agency Frontex, only on the migration transit route to Italy in 2015 there were recorded 7 thousand and between January and September 2016 as many as 12 thousand Egyptians [11].

In contrast to Egypt, transformations in Syria are still characterized by anarchy, open conflict and instability. The country already in 2012 was classified as fallen. Before the revolution and the civil war in Syria, about 22 million people inhabited the country and now in the light of some data, the population of the Syrians living in their own country was halved mainly due to migrations. Data from 2013 show that from the beginning of the civil war 2 million people left the country, which at that time accounted for about 10% of the population. In 2014, the number of refugees and immigrants increased to 3 million, and in 2015 by another million. Currently it is estimated that at the end of 2016 more than 5 million people emigrated from Syria, while in 2012 the number of refugees immigrating only to neighboring states was less than 218 thousand. While in Lebanon, the number of refugees in 2014 increased by 17 times [12]. According to the report by the UN, not only external emigrations constitute a problem, because up 6.5 million out of 22.3 million Syrians have been forced to abandon their homes and move around the country in search for safer

places to live. The overall rate of emigration of Syrian citizens indicates that half of the population before the outbreak of the civil war left their homes, half of whom were children. The scale of the tragedy is shown by the data of the UN claiming that approximately 5,000 people leave Syria on a daily basis [3, p. 17–18]. The balance of the civil war victims is equally important, as according to the UN, it claimed at least 191,000 people until 2014, and by mid-2015 years – nearly 300,000. At the same time close to 1 million persons were wounded. The current data from the late 2016 demonstrate that the population of all the Syrians is of 17,8 million (in the country and in neighboring countries), including nearly 51% of men and 49% women. The population deficit compared to 2011 results from migrations to Europe or the death of war victims. Other data reflect decline in the population of about 400 thousand in 2016 [7].

### 3. THE MIGRATION CRISIS IN EUROPE

The scale of the migration resulting from the disintegration of state systems and the demolition of social order apply not only to Syria and Egypt. There are many centers of expansion of refugees and migrants. Some of them have more than 20-year history, while others are completely new. These first arose at the turn of the 1980s and 1990s of the previous century and led from the former Soviet republics and from Asia via Poland and the Balkans to Western countries and Scandinavia. The new centers of expansion are the aftermath of the Arab Spring, and the corridors lead the flow of immigrants from North Africa and the Middle East. The map (Fig-

ure) shows the directions and scale of migrations to Europe in mid-2015.

Source: Data from Greece to 20 August 2015, from other countries to 24 August 2015, in: <http://www.newsweek.pl/swiat/uchodzcy-trzy-glowne-przyczyny-wielkiej-emigracji-z-afryki,artykuly,370503,1,1,3.html> (Accessed: 12.12.2016)

In 2015, the summary index of refugees and migrants arriving in Europe was around 2.7 million representatives of the countries of Africa and Asia, with the highest number of them recorded in Germany – about 1.7 million, while some sources indicate that even more than 2 million. In March 2016, the ratio increased by a value from 400 to 600 thousand [14].

The scale of migration to Europe leaves no doubts as to the beginning of a new era – the era of entropy of the old order and hegemony of a European in Europe in favor of the exoticism and cultural heterogeneity. In total, almost 1 million refugees and illegal economic migrants came to Europe in 2016. This state of affairs causes that the forecasts of the 1970s describing the decline of the European population became real. Bringing this idea to the ground of dynamics of changes in the macro- and mega-structures, a whole range of very complex problems of ethno-cultural nature can be encountered, which should not be considered solely from the perspectives of the state that has appeared nowadays and surprised the international community of Europe. This state of ‘awakening’ triggered by many factors embedded in historical grievances, resulting from the negligence and ignorance of European countries towards the peoples who for centuries remained under their influence, is the effect of getting out of the ‘cage’ of isolation of civilized nations, which for centuries were trapped in it. *Should it, therefore, be any surprise that*



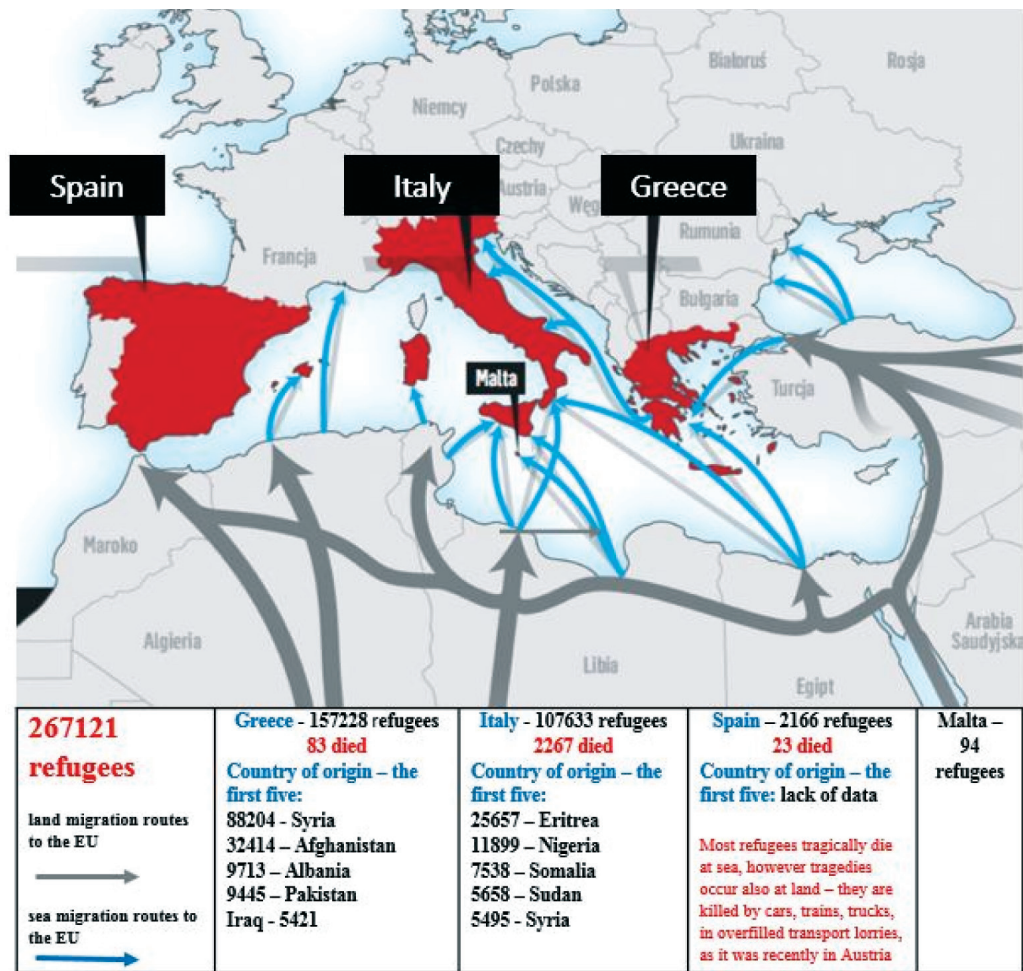


Fig. Corridors of the flow of refugees and immigrants to Europe (2015)

suddenly, under favorable conditions and the vision of opportunities for improving own lot, the expansion of immigrants and refugees from areas affected by poverty and threatened with loss of life first struck Europe? Was it anyhow possible to predict that 'the bars of that isolation' would crack sooner or later and 'foreigners' would desire prosperity enjoyed by the Europeans? Both questions are rhetorical and the peak of incurable optimism was the belief in maintaining forever the social order in Europe, at least at the

level from the period before the outbreak of the mass revolts in North Africa and the Middle East conventionally called the Arab Spring. It seems that despite the symptoms of the migration crisis that emerged after the 1989, the strength of tolerance towards cultural differences was re-evaluated, historical events were ignored, as were their effects manifested in the revival of prejudice, stereotypes and negative attitudes, such as national chauvinism, ethnocentrism, xenophobia, as well as racism. It is forgotten as

well that the cultural heterogeneity raises serious social and economic problems, and political correctness is not always in line with citizens' interests and views.

The scale of migration to Europe leaves no doubt – there is a migration crisis and it will probably remain unresolved for long. This means that conflicts of cultures and ethnic conflicts will increase in scale as well as take drastic and new, so far unknown, forms. Their specificity is that from the micro-scale they move at the breathtaking pace to the meso-scale, and vice versa. *Is, thus, there a risk that the conflict of cultures will affect the macro- and mega-scales, that it will take the form of a racial conflict, as foreseen by Ludwik Gumplowicz? Perhaps this conflict is already advanced, but courage is something that is lacking to call it by its name?* These are just proprietary author's own reflections and rhetorical questions, but they should not be ignored. They give direction to attempts at solving the dilemma contained in euphemisms raised within the topic of this text: 'glass walls', hiding the true image of contemporary Europe – closed, chauvinist and intolerant. It seems to push into the junk room the slogan – fashionable in the 1990s and later – referring to tolerance, cultural integration and living in a mutual cultural symbiosis: 'bridges instead of walls'. Let us take a view of the current situation in Europe from the perspective of etiology. Let us try to analyze the factors that contributed to the imbalance of European social order, based (in a systematic perspective) on a natural tendency to maintain functional balance – homeostasis, and to preserve the structure – morphostasis. These factors of retrospective nature undoubtedly include two related phenomena. The first of them is colonialism, while the second one – its 'imperial product – a child of globalization' called neo-colonialism, the basis of which, accord-

ing to Fr. Andrzej Zwoliński is (...) *every kind of exploitation: economic, political, cultural or religious (...) and this is continuation of colonialism in a new form* [13, p. 187–188]. For the purpose of emphasizing the scale of the phenomenon let us use a fragment of Frantz Fanon's thoughts, who pointedly shows how a great mark the expansion of the Europeans, and not only them, left on the awareness and perception of the citizens of the Arab world (...) *for centuries Europe has hampered the development of other peoples, it has subjected them to its own goals, its fame (...) it is time to understand that it is better to move away from Europe once and for all (...) Let us get rid of the obsession of catching up with Europe. (...) Let us stop imitating Europe (...) Let us try to discover a human whom Europe failed to ensure victory (...)* [See more in: 4, p. 213–216].

*How, then, should we understand this paradox we are witnessing?* On the one hand, we recognize reluctance to Europe and everything that is European, but on the other hand – the massive expansion of the Third World nationals to the areas of European countries. *Could it be that F. Fanon's words would be subject to auto-negation in the face of the reality that we are observing? After all, even if in the past Europe committed unforgivable 'infringements' in the policy towards the colonized countries, if European and international corporations economically expanded their markets, did not they at the same time put them on the path of social progress, did not they give education or enrich culture?* This is what must not be forgotten, but an objective assessment of gains and losses resulting from colonialism and neo-colonialism should be performed.

## CONCLUSION

The undeniable fact is that the ethnic and cultural problems of Europe are largely



the result of past events. Europe still pays the price for negligence and the worst thing is that it may lead to social change, which cannot be restored to the pre-crisis state. The entropy of the social system of the 'old continent' has become a reality, even though in the past it was also noticeable but to a lesser extent due to a drastic fall being noted in fertility in most European countries, the scope of the current entropy is alarming. Interestingly, changes in the social system do not only apply to indigenous citizens of European countries, but also to the so-called 'old migrants' – the settled immigrant population that came to Europe with the previous migration waves. In particular, this problem concerns the Muslim community, including representatives of the Arab world, who do not want to identify with the 'new immigrants' for fear of their safety (especially economic).

This issue is relatively new and unexplored, however it heralds the emergence of a new type of the conflict of cultures in Europe. Nonetheless, there are empirical reasons to discuss it, since the author together with Ziad Abou Saleh – scientist of Syrian origin and researcher of the Arab community in Europe – have analyzed the scale of acceptance and identification of the so-called the 'EuroArabs', i.e. the third generation of immigrants from 15 Arab states, inhabiting 9 European countries, including Poland. The research have shown that the 'EuroArabs', irrespective of the country of origin, place of residence in Europe and social position, in most cases strongly identify with European culture, show the low level

of religious orthodoxy as well as maintain tendency towards cultural integration with European citizens. At the same time they almost completely isolate themselves from the migration problems exposed in the media. It is just a harbinger of new research directions that indicate the complex context of ethno-cultural problems of Europe.

The author concludes by mentioning two words entered in the reality of modern Europe: 'walls' and 'foreigners'. It seems that in the era of the conflict of cultures, which we are witnessing, they no longer have only the symbolic character. While recently they were externalized only verbally in the media and in politics, now they have become reality. Real walls are erected, for example on the Hungarian – Serbian border, and ethnic ghettos isolated from the world with fencing and barbed wire. This means that Europe has entered a phase of not only cultural disintegration, but creates its own – very similar to the American one from the early history of the US statehood – melting pot of cultures. *What will the fate of Europe be like? Will its mosaicism become a yoke or the return to the path of tolerance and social symbiosis? Will the assumption that at the micro-level, notwithstanding the ethnic background, people are able to communicate and get rid of prejudices, restore the social order from 5 years ago?* These questions are difficult to answer today, but nonetheless solutions should be sought to exploit the potential of 'foreigners' in a rational and moral way, especially as Europe's population continues to fall.

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**«Стеклянные стены» —  
размышления о европейском мультикультурализме**

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*Европейская культура — это продукт западной цивилизации, основанной на столпах мультикультурализма, расширения и прогресса. Это место, где на протяжении веков плавильный котел культур являлся естественной движущей силой прогресса и развития, которой Европа обязана не только своим богатством, но также и своими демографическими проблемами, составляющими сегодня важнейший предмет научных дискуссий о будущем Европы и возможностях сохранения достижений прошлого уровня цивилизации, построенной поколениями. Выражение «стеклянные стены», используемое в названии статьи, носит символический характер и не имеет ничего общего с реальными барьерами, известными в истории как Великая Китайская стена, Вал Адриана, Берлинская стена или любая другая преграда. Речь идет о проявляющихся в отношениях между людьми ментальных и невидимых стенах, таких как этническое и культурное недопонимание, нетерпимость и предубеждения к людям с особенностями, отличиями.*

**Ключевые слова:** *Европа, миграционный кризис, мультикультурализм, смешение культур, миграция.*

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