In 2013, Finotelli and Sciortino discuss the current state of European visa policies and immigration control. From the 1980s onwards, European government have attempted to enforce a restrictive immigration and asylum strategy, as a result of illegal migration. This has led to Europe being referred to as ‘Fortress Europe’ by various researchers. Nevertheless, in 2013 it was estimated that European countries hosted up to 3.8 million irregular immigrants (immigrants who did not possess the required authorization). In addition, it was estimated that several million irregular immigrants acquired legal status through special programs. Also, it was reported that almost three out of four immigrants in the Italian amnesty program had entered the country legally.

Meuleman and Reeskens (2008) divided the (at that time) 27 member states of the EU into three classes, showing how tolerant the population of each country is towards immigration. The first class included the 9 most tolerant countries (U.K., Portugal, Spain, Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium, Norway, Sweden and Finland), followed by the second class (France, Germany, Switzerland, Luxembourg and Ireland) and the third class (Greece, Denmark, Austria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia, Poland, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia). It should be noted that some countries have a longer history of immigration than others, which could explain the differences. Moreover, it shows that although the EU tries to harmonize immigration policies, populations of different countries have different opinions.

+ Schengen agreement

Finotelli, C., & Sciortino, G. (2013). Through the gates of the fortress: European visa policies and the limits of immigration control. *Perspectives on European Politics and Society, 14*(1), 80-101.

Meuleman, B., & Reeskens, T. (2008). The relation between integration policy and majority attitudes toward immigration. An empirical test across European countries. Dag van de Sociologie, Leuven.